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Literature

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TRUTH BETTER THAN FICTION

OR

INTERESTING TALES AND ANECDOTES FOR
THE YOUNG

BY

FARNCESCA HENRIETTA WILSON

AUTHORESS OF 'LEARNING MADE PLEASANT'



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TO

HER DEAR

NEPHEWS AND NIECES

BY

FRANCESCA HENRIETTA WILSON

ALVESTON,

February 1871



P R E F A C E.

As this book was originally intended to be a sequel to *Learning made Pleasant*, it commences where that left off; that is, the first two stories contain no word exceeding seven letters; consequently the first is entirely fiction, and the second—‘Lovett’s First Untruth,’ &c.—is only partially founded on fact: but the incidents narrated in the subsequent chapters are perfectly true, which will generally be found far more really interesting to the young than mere fiction.

I have striven not only to interest, but also to instruct my young readers; and have endeavoured, although not limiting myself—after the first two tales—to any particular number of letters, yet to make the reading as progressive as possible.

This work is meant to answer two purposes:—first, a prize, or gift-book; and secondly, an educational work.



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TRUTH BETTER THAN FICTION.

Summer Treats.

EDITH AND MAUD FOSTER.

IT was on a fine warm day in July, when the sun shone bright and clear in the azure sky, and scarce a cloud was to be seen, that two young girls, both fair to look upon, sat under the leafy boughs of a large walnut tree, which had stood, for more than one century, near the noble mansion where they lived.

The eldest—Edith Foster—was a tall, slight girl of twelve years of age ; her long dark hair fell in wavy curls over her rosy face as she leaned forward to pluck the daisies at her feet : her eyes were large and dark with a look of thought in them not very usual at her tender age. Her sister, Maud, was a pretty, fragile little child of eleven years ; her eyes were of the

bluest, and her hair of the most golden colour one could wish to see. It always did me good to hear her merry laugh,—there was such a ring of joy in it. On this day it seemed to be more than usually joyful : the reason I will now explain.

Both Edith and Maud had been such good girls during the last half year, and had tried so hard to improve, and get on with their lessons, that their kind parents said they should have a series of holiday treats during this summer. Their teacher, Miss Nash, had gone home to her family just a week before our story begins ; and now her little pupils were full of delight at the news their papa that morning had told them. In two days' time they were to have a pic-nic at the ruins of a fine old castle, some fifteen miles from Weston Park, which was the name of their father—Admiral Foster's—estate.

THEIR IDEAS ABOUT A PIC-NIC.

‘Only fancy, Edith,’ said Maud, ‘mamma has asked the young Morgans to go with us to the pic-nic, and the Misses Stuart, and their brother, and dear Willie and Augusta Lawton, and nice Mrs. Brown is to bring her little girl ; it will be such fun if it be fine, and John, our groom, says it is nearly sure to be so. Mamma says we shall start at half-past nine o'clock ; and when we get to the castle, we are all to have a

ramble in the wood, while Joseph and the rest unpack the good things we are to eat.'

'I heard mamma and Mrs. Deane talking about the dinner,' said Edith; 'we are to have cold fowls, cold ducks, ham, cold boiled beef, pigeon pie, plum tart, and clotted cream, jelly, and no end of fruit and other sweets, the names of which I forget. It makes me quite hungry to think of all the good things we are to have. Mamma is not going to allow Mrs. Brown to provide any of the dinner, though she wished to take her share; as mamma says this is our pic-nic, and every person who comes to it is to be our guest.

'Nurse says we are not to put on our new frocks, for fear we may spoil them. "It is better," she says, "to wear a muslin or a cotton dress which will wash; for, often when people go to pic-nics they spill things on their dresses; and, by sitting on the ground, get green, and other stains on their clothes." I am sure I would rather wear my old frock than my new one; mamma always tells me we ought to take great care of our clothes, as it is wrong to spend too much money upon dress, when there are so many poor people to help, and so much money wanted to spread the Gospel at home and abroad.'

'Oh, yes, so would I far rather wear my old frock; and do you know, Edith, I have thought once or twice: "I hope this pic-nic will not cost very much

money ; for if it does, papa and mamma will have less to spend in charity.”’

‘No, Maud, you need not fear that : they give away a great deal ; and this expense is but a trifle for people so rich as our dear parents are. I only hope it will be fine ; and that we shall not have a storm of rain, with thunder, such as Julia-Carter said they had the day they went to the forest.’

‘There goes Yates, the keeper ; let us run and ask him what he thinks of the weather.’

THE PIC-NIC IS PUT OFF.

I cannot forget with what anxiety, when I was a girl, I used to watch the weather, when an early day had been fixed for a pic-nic. And so it was with these two bright young beings. They found it by no means easy to get to sleep that night before the day on which their pic-nic was to come off ; and very early were they out of bed in the morning, peeping out of their window to see what kind of day it was.

At first there was a promise of fair weather ; but by the time they were dressed, a sad change had taken place. The sun was hidden behind the clouds, which looked black and heavy ; and there was an angry tinge about them that seemed to tell of coming storms ; and every now and then the wind blew in gusts which swept the dust high up into the air : and alas ! a full

hour before the time they were to start the rain came down in earnest: pitter-patter, splash-dash it came against the window where the two poor little girls looked out with faces of dismay and sorrow.

The day wore on; and never before had a day seemed so long to them. They strove to bear this little trial as quietly as they could; but they were not able to settle down to anything. At last their dear mother came to them: she laid her hand on Maud's golden hair, and took Edith's soft hand in hers. 'You are very sorry, darling ones, that you could not have your pic-nic—are you not?' she said.

'Yes, mamma; we have looked forward with such delight to this treat, and now it seems so hard to be obliged to stay at home.'

'And yet, my dear, how much harder would it have been if we had started, and after going half the way, we had been obliged to return wet through! it would, no doubt, have given us colds, and made us ill, whereas, though we cannot enjoy our trip at present, as we hoped to do, yet we have the comfort of knowing that God orders all for us; it is most clearly His will that we should not go to-day, as the rain has been sent to prevent us. It is well that even in such trivial things as going to a pic-nic, we should seek to learn the Lord's will about it; and I always feel content and happy, though things may occur to derange my plans, if I can be sure the Lord is guiding me.

Man may propose, but God will dispose ; and for this we should ever praise Him ; as He keeps us from many dangers when He thwarts us in our various hopes and wishes.'

ANOTHER PIC-NIC IS PLANNED.

'Hark !' said Mrs. Foster, 'did you hear that distant peal of thunder ? There it is again—louder and nearer than it was before. From the look of the clouds, I think we are going to have a very heavy storm. Now, dears, are you not glad to be at home instead of being out in the storm ?'

'Oh, yes, dear mamma,' said Edith, 'I felt sure from the moment I saw the rain come down, that God knew whether it was right, or not, for us to go to the castle to-day. Oh ! how loud the thunder roars ! I am very glad we are safe at home.'

'I,' said Maud, 'will never again repine at not being able to go to any place. I shall always think of to-day, and try to cheer up, however sorry I may be to have my plans upset.'

'Yes, that is right, my dear Maud,' said Mrs. Foster, 'and think also of that verse in the Bible—you will find it in Romans, the 8th chapter and 28th verse—which says that "all things work for good to them that love God."'

How true had this dear lady found these words !

She had borne many trials during her life : four lovely boys, all older than her eldest living child, Edith, had been taken from her to the happy home she one day hoped to reach. In spite of all she had gone through, she could look back on those years of sorrow, and feel that all was well. 'As many as I love I rebuke and chasten' were sweet words of comfort to her. She knew how much there had been to chasten—how much too great had been her love for those, her darling sons ; too nearly had she made them idols ; and, oh ! that we could all learn the lesson, which the trial sent is meant to teach us !

Though the day passed but slowly to the little girls they were very happy, and played with their dolls and doll's house ; and read their pretty books, which had been given them as prizes.

The same night, Admiral Foster fixed another day for the pic-nic—three days from that ; and many were the doubts and fears of the young people lest the day should again prove wet. However, the morning dawned at last ; and when Edith and Maud rushed to their bedroom window to see what kind of weather it was likely to be, to their joy they saw that it was a bright, sunny day, just such another day as that on which we first saw these young ladies sitting under the walnut tree. They were very soon dressed, and ready to start ; their faces beaming with intense delight. The young Morgans, and Willie and Au-

gusta Lawton arrived in good time ; as they were to drive to the castle in Admiral Foster's Irish car and the dog-cart ; and soon after, all the party started in high spirits.

When they reached the castle ruins, they all set off for a long stroll in the woods close by ; all the little girls had pretty wicker baskets given them that morning by Mrs. Foster, in which to put all the wild flowers, ferns, and bright green mosses they could find.

HOW THEY ENJOYED THE PIC-NIC.

Edith Foster was a great lover of flowers, and really knew a great deal about them, as her father often took her for a walk, and gave her lessons in botany. These walks in the shady lanes and woods were a source of great delight to Edith. Her papa dearly loved to teach his darling child ; and while he spoke of the flowers and their beauty, he would tell her of the great God who made them, and who gives us so many things to enjoy in His works of nature. All the party were very hungry by the time the dinner was spread ; they sat down to eat it in the ruined hall, where, in ancient times, the lord of the castle, his family and his vassals, had daily eaten and drank. I am glad to say great justice was done to the good viands laid out there.

The ruins were of great extent, and well worth see-

ing ; so, soon after dinner, a party was made up to explore every nook and corner of them. There was a great part of the old chapel left, with several tombs in it, in various stages of decay ; and there was one little room, in a turret, in very fair repair, said to be the spot where one of the sons of the house had been slain by a servant. The murder was an act of revenge ; and young Mr. Stuart, who had often heard the legend, made all the party sit down near the spot, while he told them the tale. Then next they went to the dungeon, which had once been very large, but had now become blocked up with stones and rubbish. Here again, Mr. Stuart had some sad tales of wrongs done to relate—the history of two poor men, who had entered this dungeon, never again to come forth, nor see the light of day—they had been left to starve to death—and other tales of equal woe.

What with these stories, various kinds of games, having tea at five in the great hall, and the long drive home with the moon to light them on their way, never had Edith and Maud spent so joyous a day ; and many times did they, and the other young people, thank their papa and mamma, for giving them such a nice pic-nic. It had indeed been a success.

A few days after this, the little girls were to have another treat—one that would, no doubt, please them equally as well as the last. They were to give a rural fête to all Admiral Foster's tenants ; and everything

was to be done in grand style. Booths were being run up in several parts of the grounds ; and a very large tent was being pitched, in which the banquet was to take place. There were to be various kinds of sports—races in sacks, and races on foot : prizes were to be given by Edith and Maud to the winner of these, and to the best jumper, climber, &c. ; boys and girls were to have prizes for their sports also.

Both old and young greatly looked forward to the fête ; and when the day came, and proved to be the most balmy known that summer, nothing could exceed the joy of every one, and the perfect rapture of the two little girls who were to be the donors of the fête.

THE FÊTE.

Quite early in the day were groups of people to be seen wending their way towards the park gates ; and by ten o'clock vast numbers had arrived. It was a gay scene, every one was dressed in holiday attire—their very best clothes being put on for the day, and there were many wealthy farmers' wives and sisters, who had bought either a new gown, shawl, or bonnet, so that they might appear rather smarter than usual on so great a day as this.

Edith and Maud were quite in their element : they knew nearly all who were present ; and they flitted in and out of the booths from one group to another,

giving a hearty and warm welcome to all. 'God bless you, little ladies,' were the words echoed on all sides; and little wonder was it they were loved, for their gentle hearts were full of love to all around.

When Admiral and Mrs. Foster, with their long train of guests, came among the people, loud cheers arose; and it was some time before the speech of welcome the Admiral tried to make, could be heard. They did not want for music, for there were two very good bands present.

In the evening they had a grand display of blue, and other lights, and rockets on the lake; and the boys lit a large bonfire on a grass mound the other side of the water: the effect was really very pretty. Every one agreed that, from first to last, never had a rural fête gone off better than this one.

Before this long and joyous summer was ended, Edith and Maud were allowed to invite all their young friends to spend the evening; when Admiral Foster, in the kindest way, devoted himself to them, playing 'hunt the slipper,' 'knight of the whistle,' and other games with them. Besides these, they had various other treats; and they enjoyed each one to their heart's content.

However happy one may be, time flies just as rapidly as ever. How often we would delay its flight if we could! So felt Edith and Maud; yet, when the last day came before they were to resume their lessons,

they did not give way to useless regrets, but felt that they could set to work at their studies with renewed vigour, after having had such a long and happy rest.

When bed-time came that night, before kissing their dear parents, they both asked their papa and mamma to believe how deeply obliged they felt for all the love shown them, in giving them such great treats as they had this summer ; ‘and, dear mamma,’ said Edith, ‘you may depend on our doing our very utmost to please you and dear papa this half, if God spares us ; we will, in future, try doubly hard to learn, and to do right in all things ; we desire to be a credit to you ; and we know that the best way we can repay you for all your care of us, is to behave well, and to strive in earnest to please God at all times.’

Before I finish this story, it is well that I should tell you that these two amiable little girls—Edith and Maud Foster—were, through God’s grace, able to fulfil their good resolve : there were never any girls of their age who gave less trouble to their parents and their teacher than they did. Fair as was the promise of their youth, it did not equal the reality of their riper years, when both grew up lovely in mind and person, and were beloved by all who knew them.



*Lovett's First Untruth and Whither
it Led Him.*

INSIDE A JAIL.

I WAS on a visit to some dear friends of mine in Z——, in the depth of winter, some years ago, when the elder of them said one day, 'Have' you ever seen our County Jail? Would you like to go over it?' I replied I had never seen the jail, and would

much like to do so. The usual order was soon gained; and it was settled that we should go there on the next day.

As the time drew near for us to set off, I felt a wish to get the visit over; for, though I had never been into an English jail in my life, I knew it must be a painful sight; and I felt, as I walked along on that cold frosty day, as you, young people, no doubt, often feel when on your way to the dentist, to have a tooth taken out. 'Then,' you will very likely ask, 'why

did you want to see the jail, if it was to give you so much pain?' Well, I can easily answer you ; I always like to see any sights that can enlarge and improve the mind ; and I had a sort of hope that God might enable me to do some good if I went—perhaps to speak a few kind words to some soul needing them ; or, in one way or other, be able to follow my Master, who 'went about doing good : ' and then came into my mind those words in Matthew, 25th chapter, 36th and 40th verses. Please look them out in your Bibles, dear little readers ; they are our Lord's own words.

When we reached the great iron inner gate, a warder came forward with a large key, and let us in. He then locked the gate ; and, as the key turned in the lock, I thought what a sad thing it must be for those who hear that sound, and know that they cannot get out of that prison for a long, long time.

In the jail, each man has a cell to himself, in which is a small window, high up in the wall, with iron bars outside the glass. There is only a small wooden cot in the cell ; and a bracket or stand in one corner, nailed to the wall, on which is placed a Bible. A great many of the cells were empty, as several of the inmates were working at the wheel. I dare say some of you have been into a jail, and have seen what the wheel is like ; but in case there may be any who do not know about it, I will explain to you what it is.

The wheel itself grinds corn ; it is a huge wheel,

several yards broad, with stairs or steps all round it, and as the wheel goes round, the steps go with it, so that the men who work at it are always going up stairs, as it were ; and they must soon become very tired ; so they are allowed to get down off the wheel, when it has gone round a few times ; and they can then sit on a bench until it has again been three times round ; after which they are obliged to mount the wheel till their next turn comes for resting.

THE FELON LOVETT.

Each man has to tread a certain number of hours on the wheel ; and, if they behave well, in course of time, this hard labour lessens by degrees ; and they are put to do other work, which is very much nicer, and more easy for them.

I saw one poor fellow—whom I knew from his clothes to be a felon—in the kitchen, making the gruel for the evening meal : this was quite freedom to him, after the cell and the wheel. There was a look in his pale face, which made me wish to speak to him ; and when the rest of our party moved off into the next room, I stayed behind, and said kindly to him, ‘ You look very pale ; are you ill ? ’

‘ No, thank you, ma’am,’ he replied, ‘ I am not ill now ; but I was well nigh dead this time three months ago : I was so bad, I never thought I should ever rise

off that bed ; and, may be, it would have 'been better if I had died ; for then I should have been quite sure not to trouble anybody no more.'

'Oh ! do not say so,' I said, 'it is never too late in this life to mend ; whereas, if you had died, your day of grace would have been over, and what would have become of your soul? For what crime are you, in prison?' I asked.

'For getting into a house some four years ago, and taking a lot of plate and jewels.'

'How very sad !' I said ; 'What led you first to take to such crimes?'

'*Telling a lie,*' said he, very bluntly : 'since I came in here, I have read a good deal from the Bible they put in my cell ; and I am quite sure now, that *all my evil ways began when I told that lie, and stuck to it.* How well I mind that day ! I fancy I can see my mother's face, when she thought I had told her a lie : I made her believe, too, that I had told the truth, God forgive me !'

Oh ! dear little ones, you cannot think how glad I was to hear that man say, 'God forgive me.' I hoped they were not vain words, but the sincere wish of his heart.

'Would you like to tell me all about it, if I can get leave to come and see you another day?' I asked.

'That I should, ma'am ; it is many a long day since

I spoke of *my* home and my mother,' he said, as he brushed a tear from his eye.

'Very well, you shall have that comfort, if God wills, before long,' I said; 'but now, good-bye; I hear my friends calling me.'

'Thank you, ma'am, thank you,' were his parting words.

I laid my request 'to revisit the jail before the jailor, who seemed to wonder at my wish to hear the felon's story. He did not know the earnest hope I had of taking comfort to the poor man; and how I was sure his heart would soften while he told me of those he once loved, and whom he had, no doubt, much grieved. I did indeed trust this story he meant to tell me would so soften and prepare the ground of his heart, that I might, with great hope of growth, sow the good seed.

THE FELON'S STORY.

The next day but one, I walked to the jail; and the jailor at once gave orders for me to be taken to number 30—the number of the felon's cell. I went some way down the stone passage before we reached his door; and the undoing of the iron bolts made a dismal noise, as the sound echoed through the prison. The door was flung open for me to *pass* through, and I stepped into the cell. It was again barred behind me; and, I must own, I felt my heart beat a little faster, as I saw that I

was shut up within that narrow space, face to face with a felon.

However, I soon calmed myself with these words of real comfort,—they are all in the Psalms : ‘ Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.’ ‘ Wait on the Lord : be of good courage.’ The words just flashed through my brain, leaving peace in my heart ; and I began to address the young man before me. He was picking oakum—that is, pulling to pieces old ends of rope ; and stood up when I entered.

‘ Well, ma’am,’ he said, ‘ it is good of you to come. I am sorry, ma’am, I have no seat but this bed to offer you ; I am afraid you will find it hard.’

I seated myself, and begged him to do the same, knowing that he passed many hours when he had not the power to rest ; and I wanted him to feel at ease.

‘ Now,’ I said, ‘ will you please tell me about your former life, as you said you would ; I shall much like to hear it, though I fear it is a sad tale.’

‘ Well, ma’am, my father and mother would thank you for this, if they could know of it ; it is a wonder you should care to hear of the like of me ; however, as you are so good, I may as well begin by telling you that my parents are named Lovett ; they are honest folk. My father has a pretty fair trade as a grocer, in Reading ; but when I was a little chap, he wasn’t so well off, and often had hard times.

‘One day, I went with my mother to a lady’s house, and a young gent there gave me four pence : that was great riches to me, and I was very happy. My mother said I was to give her the money, to keep for me ; and that one day I should go to the large toy-shop, at the other end of the town, and spend it. When we got home, I saw mother put it into a little pill-box she kept in a basket on the small table. I did not mean to touch it then ; but lay awake that night, and tried to make up my mind what I should buy with it. I could not succeed, and fell asleep while I thought the matter over.

‘The next day I asked mother when she could take me to the shop, and she said, “not for two or three days,” as she had the washing to do. I soon got tired of waiting, and began to peep into the box, just to get a sight of my money ; but I always shut it up quickly, if I heard my mother coming. You see, ma’am, this was, as it were, the first link in my chain of after sins : *I tried to deceive my mother*—her, whom God says in His Book, I ought to honour. I do honour her now, since I have come to know what a sinner I am : may God forgive me !’

THE VOICE OF THE TEMPTER.

‘I went on, ma’am, peeping and peeping at my little bit of money, till at last I took it out of the pill-box, and looked at it ; and then the devil put it into my

heart to keep it, and not to replace it ; so I kept the piece, and put it safely up in my drawer, where I thought mother could not see it.

‘The next morning she said, “Now my boy, we will go to Watson’s to get the four pence spent, which the young master at Ashton Lodge so kindly gave you ; you know I told you we should go soon, and I always try to do as I promise ; so go and put on your best clothes, and come with me.”

‘Oh !’ thinks I to myself, ‘I will get the four pence, and put it back into the pill-box before mother can find out that it is gone ;’ but, lo and behold ! when I went up to my drawer to look for it, it was gone ! gone !! I believe a servant girl my mother kept, who was soon after found to be a thief, took it. I can’t tell you what I felt, ma’am : the devil soon taught me what to *say* ; and so I put on my best clothes, and made up my mind to tell a lie. There was naught else left me, I thought : Oh ! how I wish I had had courage to tell my mother the truth !

‘I was ready before she was, and went down stairs, and sat in the room waiting for her. Down she came ; and up she goes to the basket, gets out the pill-box, and, turning it up in her hand, says, “Now here is your —— : well I never ! I had better have said here is *not*. Well now, what has become of that four pence ? Oh dear ! oh dear ! I dare say father took it to pay for the bread. I’ll run and ask him.” Off she went,

while I sat, feeling like the thief I was soon to become.

‘Back came my mother, quite red in the face with horror at having, as she fancied, lost the four pence. “No, child,” says she, “father didn’t take it.” Just then she caught sight of my guilty face, and, coming towards me, she said, “Well, I declare, if *you* have not taken it! Now tell me the truth; have you taken it? or have you not?” I replied, “I have not; no indeed, mother, I have not.” Then she said, “Oh! I am glad of that, my boy; I feared you had not done right; but who can have taken it?”

‘Just then, she again glanced at me; and, with a look of great pain in her face, she came across the room to where I was sitting, and said, “Oh, Thomas! I am afraid you are telling me an untruth; you *have* taken your four pence; you never looked like that before; I am sure you are guilty.” I then, a second time, told my poor mother she was wrong, that I had *not* taken the money; and I began to cry, and said it was very strange that she should think I could tell her a story, and so on.

‘After a bit, my mother began to fancy the baby might have got at the basket and pill-box, and dropped it out—our baby was then two and a half years old, and was a regular chap to finger things. And so mother took me to the shop, and spent four pence out of her own purse, and I felt like a thief. Still I could

not bring myself to speak the truth ; and after a time I got so hard, that I did not care, nor feel any shame ; and I could easily make excuses for myself. The next time it served my purpose to tell a lie, I did it without a blush, it came out more easy like ; and before I had done with it, I had to tell a good many more, to prevent that one being found out ; and so I went on, from bad to worse. My mother never knew I lied ; I was too clever a rogue to let her find it out.

EVIL COMPANY.

‘ In a short time, I became great friends with a boy named Pearse ; he was older and bigger than I was, and I was proud to be noticed by him. He very soon took me to a house where we met other boys, all three or four years my senior. They used to play cards ; and, as I was a sharp chap for my age, I learnt to play as well as any of them, and Pearse lent me some money to stake. I very soon, however, paid him back ; for I soon won from all of them except Pearse, who was nearly sure to win, and never, hardly, lost.

‘ I could not make out why this was, and one day I asked him ; so he said, “ Well, you little fool, I’ll tell you, if you’ll promise to go shares with me in your gains, and keep the secret.” I readily agreed, and then he told me that he cheated ; and he showed me the trick, and how to cheat also, and made me practise in private till I had learnt to do it neatly ; after which,

I began, By degrees, to win more money than I had ever done ; and, as I had always played well, nothing was noticed by the other boys.

‘ By the time I was sixteen, I had learnt to be about as bad as I could be, in every way ; and many were the tears shed by my parents on my account. I had no sister ; I often thought if I had one I might have been better. My father wanted me to help him in the shop, for I was a smart hand at figures. However, this did not suit my book at all ; and I was very lazy, and idle, and took no pains to please any one. At last, one day when I was far from sober, what must I do, but go and enlist for a soldier ; and when I left the place, I just sent a line to my father to say what I had done. He and my mother wrote me piteous letters. For a day or two, I felt a little sorry, and wished I could do better ; but it soon wore off, and I got amongst the worst men in my corps, and fell an easy victim to their vicious habits.

‘ I was three years in the army, and might have done well if I had a mind to ; but I and another man stole some brandy out of the mess ; and we were both tried for it, and drummed out of the service ; and I was in prison for four months besides, for that offence. When I came out, I went to London, and joined a gang of thieves ; but I managed to keep free of jail, till four years ago, and then I got sent here, ma’am. My time will be up in six months ; and when I get

out, I am sure I don't know what is to become of

A WORD IN SEASON.

He gave a deep sigh, and ceased to speak ; but he turned his eyes towards his Bible, which lay on the bracket. 'Yours is a very, very sad history,' I said. 'I believe you are right ; that untruth you told your mother was the first step in your career of guilt. It is a great mercy that you see it to be so, and have been led to read God's Word. I feel that there is great hope for you yet. God spared your life three months ago when you were so ill, on purpose to give you the power to turn over a new leaf, and to go to Christ to have your sins blotted out. Surely, when you leave this jail, if God spares you to do so, you will not return to your past bad life ? I am sure you cannot.'

'Well, ma'am, it is not my wish to go back to it ; but still, I'm afraid I am fit for nothing else. What can I do ? I am ashamed to go home to my parents ; I have never written once to them for twelve years ; how could I ? They won't want to see such a bad son as I have been to them. They have a good son—my brother Harry—he lives with them, I am told ; and helps father and mother in the shop, as I ought to have done. Harry is three years younger than I am ; and always was as good a lad as you would wish to see. No, ma'am ; I couldn't go back home, to bring

trouble and shame on them ; and then, if I try to get work, I don't think I'll be able to get it ; as I have only a bad name to give any one who may inquire about me. People wouldn't take me, if they knew what I had been.'

'I will try,' said I, 'and get you some work, if you will promise me you will never go near your former haunts again, and will do your best to lead a better life.'

'Thanks, kind lady,' he replied ; 'I know my word isn't worth much ; but, if you will be so kind as to trust me, I'll try and show you I am in earnest, when I say I want to be a good man : maybe I'll get to heaven some day, if I am.'

'If you get to heaven, it will not be *your good* life that will get you there,' I said ; 'if you were to lead the most upright, moral life, and were *trusting in that, and not in Christ's blood*, you would be as far from heaven as ever you were. You must first trust, or believe in the merits of Christ's blood, which was shed for you ; and then you must *show* that you do believe, by giving up your life to God's service, and by walking in his paths.'

GOD'S OWN WORDS BROUGHT HOME.

I rose and took down his Bible from the bracket ; and, turning to the 2nd chapter of James, and 18th verse, said, 'You see what is written here ; "I will show

thee my faith by my works;" proving that works should follow if we really love Christ; but we must be careful not to *trust* in works, instead of in Christ, and fancy that *they* can save us. These words, from another epistle written by Paul the apostle, tell us plainly how we are saved; "*For by grace are ye saved through faith;*" and again, "*Not of works lest any man should boast.*" But in the next verse he says, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

'If only out of love to our Lord and Master, who has done *all* for us, we must even try and do a little for Him. Christ died for *sinner*s, my friend! He came to seek and to save *the lost*; and we must trust *in Him* solely, and wholly, before we can reach Heaven. God will accept us, if we turn to him, for his Son's sake; Christ says, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out;" and again, "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

'Oh! I entreat you, if you feel sorry, and really repent of your sins, delay not to confess them to God. Fear not to fall on your knees, and confess every sin you can call to mind; and then ask God to pardon you for Jesus' sake, and to give you a new heart; pray to be shown how to love God. I feel certain that if you often pray for His Holy Spirit, it will not be long before your heart will warm with real desire to serve God, and peace and joy will follow. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him

while He is near." I entreat you again not to delay.'

The poor man seemed much moved, and the tears stole down his pale, haggard face as he said, in a broken voice, 'May be, my poor dear mother has been praying for me, and God has heard, and is going to answer her prayers. She is a woman who loves and fears God; and well I mind her telling me how much she prayed for me; that was the very day before I left my home. I little thought then, I should ever care to know that she prayed for me.'

Oh! dear young readers; I felt so happy when I heard him speak thus. I read to him many verses from God's Word; and we both knelt in prayer, on those bare stones; and I thought, as we did so, that there was joy in heaven. When we rose from our knees, he told me he had not knelt to pray, nor said a prayer for many years, till then; he had feared, he said, to do so before; but now he would, with God's help, spend all his spare hours in reading the Bible and in prayer.

LOVETT'S NEW LIFE.

I was quite sorry when the warder came to take me away; however, I agreed if I could get leave to do so, that I would go and see him once more before I left L——. I was able to fulfil my promise, and, to my joy, found the poor fellow very happy in spirit. He

seemed to have been reading the Bible a great deal, and told me he found the Psalms helped him to pray ; that the 51st Psalm was a great comfort, and that he had learnt it by heart. I gave him my address, and told him to come to me, in the country, when he left the jail.

It is now six years since he came to my door, covered with dust, having walked all the way from L ——. I soon had him dressed in good plain clothes, and sent him into the farm, under my bailiff, so that I could watch his conduct, and see how he got on. I am glad to be able to tell you, that the bailiff said he had never seen a man work better in his life ; and it was not long before he took the pledge, which he has, I am glad to say, *kept* up to this time.

When my bailiff died, a year ago, I put Lovett into his place ; and he is now doing much good amongst the men under him. I assure you they respect and love him much ; and well they may, for he is worthy of it. His simple, earnest faith in Christ, shines forth in his whole life, and I praise the Lord for His mercy towards him.

I dare say you would like to know what has become of his parents. As soon as he came to me, I wrote to his mother, telling her about her son, and begging her to come at once and see him. Two days after that his father, mother, and brother arrived ; and who can tell the joy of that meeting ? Since that time, his father


has given up the shop to his son Harry ; and he and his wife have come to reside with their eldest son. The fond, praying mother has seen her prayer granted, and her sorrow has indeed been turned into joy.

I trust, dear young friends, that this sad tale, which, through God's mercy, ends so happily, has not been written in vain. I hope you will all learn to value truth, and avoid deceit. 'Thou God seest me,' is a text we should ever have present with us in our hearts ; and you may be quite sure of this, if we resist the devil, he will flee from us ; and if we draw nigh to God He will draw nigh to us.



Two Anecdotes of Little Children.

THE LETTERS 'I' AND 'U.'

OW you are five years old, dear Maria ; I really think you ought to begin to learn your letters,' said Mrs. Forbes to her little girl.

'Oh ! yes, dear mamma, I am indeed quite old enough to do lessons now ; and I shall enjoy sitting by you while you teach me, so very much. May I go and fetch that little green book from which you used to teach Walter ?'

'No, Maria ; I have something you will like, at present, much better than a book. Look here ! see what I bought this morning for you ; it is a nice box of letters ; you must be very careful not to lose any of them, because, if you do, the set will be spoilt, and that would be a pity.'

'I will try not to lose one, dear mamma ; I always wish to keep my toys and my things a long time. I

do not at all like to break, or tear my picture books ; you know I have the one you gave me more than a year ago, and it is still quite good, not one leaf is gone, or torn ; so I hope I may be able to take care of these pretty letters. Oh, how nice they are, mamma ! Do let me begin now ; may I ?

‘ Very well, darling ; you must repeat the letters after me, as I say them ; we will only have those as far as H, and learn them perfectly, before we take the rest out of the box.’

When Maria’s first lesson was finished, Mrs. Forbes said to her, ‘ Teaching you, Maria, reminds me of a dear little girl I once knew, named Hennie Wilton : shall I tell you about her ?’

‘ Please, dear mamma, I should like so much to hear.’

‘ This little girl, Hennie, made such a queer mistake ; when Mrs. Wilton was teaching her the alphabet, she repeated the letters after her mother, as you did just now after me ; but, whenever she came to the letters “ I ” and “ U,” instead of saying “ I,” as Mrs. Wilton did, she always said “ U.” “ No, my dear, not U, but I,” her mamma replied. “ *You*, mamma,” the child answered ; and again, when Mrs. Wilton came to the letter “ U,” Hennie said “ *Me*, mamma ?” Mrs. Wilton had then to explain, that there was no letter called “ Me ” in the alphabet ; but what Hennie called “ Me ” was really “ U.” This mistake did not last long ;

but it caused some merriment to both mother and child.'

WHICH IS THE COLONEL.

'What a funny little girl!' said Maria, 'I wish I could see her. Do you remember anything more about her, mamma?'

'Nothing that I can think of just now; but there is an odd anecdote of her little brother John, at which, I dare say, you will be amused. His papa was a military man; so John, all his life, had been quite accustomed to know soldiers and officers of all ranks. Long before he could read, he knew quite well that the officer who commands a regiment is called "colonel," and the second in command "major." When John went to school for the first time, he had only just come from abroad; and he was sorely puzzled at all he heard and saw; everything seemed so strange to him.


There were several teachers in the school; and he wondered to himself, which was the head teacher; so, soon after, by way of finding out what he so much wanted to know, to the great amusement of everybody, he asked which was the Colonel, and which was the Major; adding, he supposed Mrs. Fane was the Colonel, and Miss Gore the Major. He was quite right; Mrs. Fane was the lady to whose school he went, and Miss Gore was the head teacher.'

‘I suppose this funny little boy thought the school was like a regiment, mamma ; the teachers were the officers, and the children were the soldiers ; I am sure I shall always think of John Wilton, whenever I see a regiment pass our house again, mamma.’



A Queer Case in Hospital.

HOSPITAL VISITING.

 VISITING in hospital is by no means work suitable for very young people ; but still I would like to tell you of the good which can be done in this way. The fact is, many of you little readers may, and will I trust, remember years hence, if God spares you, the lessons I am trying to teach, while at the same time, I seek to amuse you.

‘Now,’ you will say, ‘all this is very dry ; I do wish she would make haste and tell us a story, if she intends to do so.’ Very well, dear children ; but, first of all, please allow me to explain *why* I always think hospital visiting of such use.

To begin with myself : I find that the sight of others suffering makes me doubly thankful for the mercies God gives me ; thus, while I am reading the Bible to the sick, and praying with them, I get much comfort

and peace for my own soul; and this proves how true are these beautiful words in the Bible, "He that watereth shall be watered also himself." (Proverbs 11th, 25th verse).

Again, by going into hospitals, I have often found out the worst cases of distress; and when these poor creatures have been cured for the time being, and sent out of hospital to their homes, often in a very weak state, I am able to send them good food to help them to get strong; and you may be sure I do the best I can to assist them in the future.

You cannot tell, dear children, how glad the sick feel, when they see that they are not forgotten by those who are well, and able to get about; it is a great blessing to have the power to cheer those long weary hours of pain and weakness, and to speak of Christ to the sick and dying, telling of His love for poor lost sinners; and if one sees, as is sometimes the case, a sick person not properly cared for, or in want of any comfort, why then a private word to the doctor in charge soon puts that to right.

And now my young friends, having read thus far, you will wonder no more, why the lady writer likes to go into such places as hospitals. I have no doubt you *did* wonder, when you read the title of this chapter; and you will think something very sad and dreadful is coming after all this: well perhaps there *is*; and perhaps there *is not*.

One of the hospitals I used often to visit, when I lived in M——, in India, was for natives. One evening, I was just about to enter, when a light country cot, or bedstead, came in sight, carried by two or three men : on it lay a poor young man ; he seemed to be unconscious, and at the point of death. As they put down the cot in front of the door, I leaned over him to see if he was alive—he lay so still ; but I soon found from his uneasy breathing, that he was not dead ; and he then gave a hoarse groan. I called to my husband, who was in our carriage close by, to come and look at him : he inquired what was the matter with him ; and the men who brought the poor fellow, said he had been fighting with another man, who had given him a fearful blow on his chest ; and that he had fallen down, and had never spoken since.

TAKEN IN.

We thought he was much injured, and told the people who were standing round him, to give him a little water, and see if he could swallow ; they did so ; but a loud gurgling noise in his throat alarmed them so much, that they gave him no more. When they again lifted the cot to remove the sufferer into the hospital, his groans became louder and more frequent ; and as I sat talking to the sick women in another ward, I could still hear the moans of this young man, as the medical assistants examined his chest to see what part was injured.

I quite expected to hear that his lungs were severely hurt ; and when I had left the ward, and was crossing the paved courtyard in the centre of the building, I asked five or six men whom I saw coming towards me, 'How is that poor man? What is the matter with him?'

Now, what do you think was the reply? I am quite sure you would never guess; you would fancy, as I did, that the answer might have been 'dead' or 'dying;' but no, it was nothing of the kind; it was 'quite well; never was better in his life; there is nothing at all the matter with him.'

I stared at the man who spoke; and said, 'What do you mean? Do you mean to say that the man who was brought in half an hour ago, apparently so ill, is quite well?'

'Yes,' said the man in charge, laughing as he replied, 'There he is, there is nothing the matter with him;' and saying this, he pulled the man by the arm, and made him stand in front of me.

All the rest of the party were laughing; I could hardly believe my own eyes; however, it was quite true; there was the man, standing upright, and looking at me; and, in a minute more, he walked off out of the hospital, quite steadily, and not seeming to care one bit for being found out shamming.

The hospital assistant told me, that, on taking him into the ward to examine his chest, he felt his pulse,

and looked at his tongue ; and finding nothing wrong with either, he began to suspect that it was all pretence ; after sounding his lungs, &c., he became quite sure of it, and ordered him to get up ; however, as he did not attempt to move, he threw some cold water on him ; and up sprang the man in an instant, and his shamming was at an end.

It was not the first time the hospital assistant had seen such a case as this. I had never been so taken in, in my life before ; and shall not forget my surprise at finding how *nicely* I had been duped. I had always seen natives do their best to avoid going into hospital ; so that I never thought any one would pretend to be ill, so as to be taken there. I fancy it was this man's love of untruth, which made him play us such a wicked trick ; also, he thought very likely, that it would be a good way of ending a fight, when he found he was getting the worst of it.





Aunt Flora's Indian Anecdotes.

AN AUTUMN EVENING.

IT was on a cold day in the latter end of Autumn, when the yellow leaves fall thick and fast, and the quickly closing-in days warn us of the approach of winter, that a merry party of children were gathered round their beloved aunt—Mrs. Newton—who had lately arrived in England, after a long residence in India.

It was true that, during the time she had lived abroad, she had paid one or two visits to her native land ; but the young people who were now rejoicing over her return, had never been able to enjoy her society so thoroughly as now, nor have her so much to themselves.

The saddening influence of the weather and scene without had little effect on their spirits, which were as high as—perhaps higher than ever : however the eldest

of them—Mary Crofton—who was fifteen years of age, thought the noise they were making would prove too much for their aunt's head ; so she proposed that, if dear Aunt Flora was not too tired, she would be so kind as to tell them some stories of Uncle Herbert's wild-hog hunting exploits.

‘A first-rate idea,’ cried Hubert ; ‘this miserable dull day is just suited to tales of wild beasts ; yes, do dear Auntie, please tell us something about Indian wild sports.’

‘It is rather a good joke your asking me to tell you stories of that kind, considering that I never went out hunting ; but in spite of my not having been present, I will try and rake out the corners of my memory, so as to give you a correct account of one or two days’ hunting, in which Uncle Herbert proved himself to be no mean sportsman.’

All the children placed their chairs, brought their work, and sat round the table, while Mrs. Newton seated herself between Alice and Ellen ; and after a few seconds’ thought, she began the following narrative.

TRAVELLING IN THE MONSOON.

‘Uncle Herbert at one time was very ill from sun-stroke, and was ordered by the medical men who were attending him to go up to the Chiculda Hills for three months’ change of air ; this was the means of doing

him much good, and he soon got strong and well again.

‘When the time came for him to return, the rainy season—or, as we call it, the “Monsoon” had begun; the roads were heavy with deep mud, and most of the rivers and nullahs—or watercourses, were full of water; and this, in a land where, at that time, were few bridges, made travelling difficult enough, I can assure you.’

‘Then how can you cross the rivers, Auntie, if you have no bridges?’ asked Walter; ‘have you ships to take you across?’

‘No, my dear boy, I wish we had; our boats are of the most primitive, old-fashioned kind; just such as the ancient Britons used before the coming of Christ: they are sometimes composed of wicker-work, like a basket, only covered with bullock’s hide, and quite round; and I have twice crossed a very broad and deep river in one; and all the time we were crossing, two men had to bail out the water, which, in spite of all their best efforts, rose rapidly; and we were only kept dry by standing on brushwood and straw which had been piled up in the boat. I assure you it was as much as the men could do to keep us from sinking. I know, I for one, felt very glad and thankful when I saw we were nearing the land.

‘Another kind of boat into which I have been obliged to venture, is the hollow trunk of a tree; of course, one cannot sit down in it; and the natives do not use oars,

but paddles or long poles, when the water is not too deep, which send it along pretty rapidly.'

A WILD BOAR CHASE.

'But to proceed with my story: on this occasion your uncle found travelling very difficult; but in spite of this, he managed to hunt almost daily, wherever there was any game to be found; and the heavy, muddy ground over which he had to ride, soon tired out all his horses, except one—a fine Persian he seldom rode, as he was his buggy horse.'

'What is a buggy, Aunt?' asked Alice.

'It is a two-wheeled carriage, or conveyance, something like a large gig with a hood to it; it holds two people, and is very light'

'Your uncle was not far from the river Poornah; and, although it was not in his line of march, he determined to turn aside to it, as he heard there were a great many wild pigs in the ravines near its banks.

'I before said that all his riding horses were done up; so there was nothing for him to ride, except this Persian, named "Feel-pah"—which means "elephant foot:"—mounting him, he set off in search of wild pigs; and he had not gone far when he saw a large boar in front of him.'

'Your uncle at once rode at him; but the boar seemed uncertain which to do—whether to charge, or take to his heels; perhaps he thought the large Persian

horse, with Uncle on him, looked too imposing ; or perhaps he felt the weather was too warm to fight.

‘ Oh, Auntie ! do the pigs then, in India, feel the heat ? ’ asked Walter.

‘ No, my dear,’ replied Mrs. Newton, laughing, ‘ I was joking when I said that.’

‘ Do not interrupt Aunt,’ said Mary ; ‘ let her go on with her story.’

‘ Pray allow them to ask questions, dear Mary,’ said Mrs. Newton ; ‘ it is well to inquire about anything they do not understand ; and to try and learn all they can, even from a story told by Aunt Flora.’

‘ However, to continue. The boar turned his back on uncle, and ran along the bottom of a watercourse—which, as I said before, we would call a ‘ nullah ’ in India ; there was not much water in it, but the mud was deep. Uncle gave chase, and rode after him, at the same time looking on both sides of the nullah to see which ground looked the best for riding over. He quickly decided that the right side was the better in every way ; so determined to turn the boar up on to it ; he therefore put spurs to his horse, and rode hard up the left bank, very soon driving the pig up the right bank of the nullah, as he had intended.’

THE ENCOUNTER.

‘ When the boar was about two hundred yards away, your uncle crossed the nullah, put “ Feel-pah ” to full

speed, and rode over the muddy, uneven ground as fast as the Persian's legs could carry him: in a few seconds he came up with the boar; and now began a fight, which was to be one of the most exciting encounters uncle ever had with a wild boar—doubly exciting, as no one was near to assist in killing him, the grooms or horsekeepers being far behind with the extra spear; and because Uncle knew that he had only one spear with him on which to depend, and that if that broke he would have none to fall back upon.'

'Truly a most uncomfortable position to be in,' you will say; but "pig-stickers"—as they are called in India—seldom think of this, or know what fear is; I am sure Uncle Herbert does not. Just as he was on the point of spearing the boar, the animal turned sharp round towards the horse, and your uncle's spear struck with full force against one of his ribs. The shock was so great, that, for a few seconds, uncle felt as if his arm was broken; and, had he not been a splendid rider, he must have been sent right out of his saddle. It often happens in these encounters that both horse and rider are sent rolling on the ground; and the poor horses, and sometimes even the riders get cut by the boar's tusks.'

'Please Aunt, tell me what sort of things are tusks?' asked Walter.

'Very strong, sharp teeth, replied Mrs. Newton, "projecting from two to three inches out of the mouth,

on each side of the lower jaw ; they are very strong, and so sharp that they cut like a razor ; their great strength is owing to their being twice as far inside the jaws as they are outside. There are smaller curved tusks in the upper jaw, which act as sharpeners to the lower ones. Sportsmen treasure up these formidable tusks as trophies ; just in the same way as fox-hunters in England preserve the brushes or tails of the foxes.

‘ Well, dear children, after this first encounter, your uncle turned his horse as quickly as he could, and was just in time to meet the enraged boar in full charge. This time, the spear entered the animal at the back of his neck, between the shoulder-blades ; and the bamboo handle split up, rendering the spear utterly useless ; so Uncle left it sticking in the pig.

‘ He then called loudly for his horsekeepers, while the wounded boar took shelter under a bush. There was nobody to be seen anywhere, except a villager in the distance who was going home, with a thick iron-headed stick in his hand. Uncle rode up to, and asked the man to lend him the stick ; but he would not do so ; so there was nothing for it, you and I would think, but to leave the boar to his fate, and go back quietly to camp. No, we would be wrong ; there was something else for it ; though it was, I must confess, a very daring feat.’

RECEIVING A CHARGE ON FOOT.

‘Uncle Herbert rode back ; and fastening his horse to a tree, near the spot where he had left the boar, went on foot towards him.

‘No sooner did the wounded beast see him coming, than he charged him as before, though, perhaps with rather less force, as his strength must have somewhat lessened. Your uncle had, as you know, nothing in his hand with which to defend himself, but his intention was, as the boar charged him, to seize the end of the broken spear and drive it through him ; so he stood to receive the charge, and catching the spear in his upraised hands, he turned the boar over, drove the spear right through him, and then let him go.

‘Uncle knew the animal was too badly wounded to go far away—besides the spear would prevent his getting through the bushes ; and at the same time he wished to put the poor creature out of his pain, by killing him as soon as possible ; so he went back as fast as he could to his horse, unfastened, and mounted him, and again went off in search of his horsekeepers and the spears. This time he soon came in sight of them, and also the two fine greyhounds that were with the men.

‘Taking a fresh spear he let go the hounds ; and, aided by their keen scent, he very soon found the then

dying boar, and put an end to his sufferings without further delay.'

'Oh! thank you Aunt,' said Mary, 'you have told us such an interesting tale.'

'Do let us have another, dear kind Auntie,' said Ellen.

'But first of all please tell me; is not the wild boar good for food?' asked Arthur.

'Oh! yes, it is the most delicate meat possible, like very tender finely-flavoured pork, with a certain 'gamy' taste about it. When your uncle kills a boar, it always provides excellent dinners for ourselves, and for all our numerous servants besides; and when on a journey, one is sometimes very glad of good food; and the game the country provides is very acceptable. There are various kinds, but there is none so really nice as the wild boar. The tongue of the blue bull is thought to be a great luxury; but among the larger game, I prefer the meat of the wild pig to any.'

ANOTHER STORY.

'I can if you like, tell you of a somewhat similar exploit of your uncle Herbert's; only instead of its being a boar that he speared this time it was a large sow.'

'Oh! please go on, Auntie,' they all exclaimed.'

'Well, to begin with, I ought to tell you, that every year in the winter—or "cold season," as we call it in

India—your uncle gets two months' leave ; and we go out into the country ; and sometimes we visit several places of interest, staying a few days at each.

'We were once, on one of these occasions, in a large but half-ruined house, which was situated in a deserted place, that had many years before been a military station—or cantonment. There was something very wild and sad about the spot ; it was a mass of ruins ; there were buildings in every stage of decay ; some nothing more than mere heaps of rubbish ; remains of gardens, which had once been pretty ; carriage-roads, now completely covered with grass and weeds ; and here and there some gate-pillars marking the entrance to what had, no doubt, been a well-kept garden, which had surrounded the now roofless house.

'It was a great amusement to me to explore these numerous ruins ; and to weave tales about the people who had lived there, and picture events which might have taken place.

'Nearly every morning your uncle used to go out hunting or shooting. On the day I am going to tell you about, he had made up his mind not to go in search of wild pigs, but merely to try if he could shoot an antelope ; he therefore did not put on his hunting costume ; and, instead of his long thick leather boots with spurs on them, he wore a pair of light walking shoes. He rode a large, strong pony, and took with him two grooms, or horsekeepers, one carrying his

rifle, and the other a light spear, in case he might have to run down a wounded antelope.

'After riding slowly about three miles, they came to a small hill from which a good view could be had of the country around ; then your uncle got off his pony, and walked up the hill, followed by the horsekeeper who carried the rifle. "Sahib, Sahib," cried the latter, 'here comes a sounder of pig,' (a "sounder" means a herd). The man was looking out on the opposite side of the hill to that on which your uncle was standing ; and he, knowing that there was no jungle near, felt convinced that the man was making a mistake.'

'Are wild pigs never to be seen, Aunt, except in the jungle?' asked Mary.

'They are very seldom found out in the open,' replied Mrs. Newton ; 'they do not like to be away from their jungle homes, where they can hide among the brushwood ; but on this occasion, they appeared to be crossing from one jungle to another, and so came towards the hill where your uncle stood watching them.'

AN AWKWARD SITUATION.

'When the "sounder" drew quite close, your uncle ran down the hill, mounted his pony, took his spear, and rode after the largest of them. After a fast gallop of over half a mile, he speared one of the largest sows he had ever seen ; and at the same moment reined in his

pony ; he held down the pig on one side of him, leaning with his right hand on the spear, while he turned himself round in the saddle to look for his horse-keeper.

‘Just at that instant, the wounded sow moved, and the pony becoming frightened, reared up suddenly ; and your uncle, being quite unprepared for this—in fact, sitting half off his pony at the time, failed to keep his seat, and slid off on to the ground, retaining the spear in his hand, and releasing the pig as he did so.

‘The first thing he tried to do, but without success, was to catch his pony, who, finding himself free, ran away ; and there was your uncle left alone, and on foot, with an angry, wounded beast ready to charge him.’

‘Oh ! what did Uncle do ?’ exclaimed Arthur.

‘He did the very best thing he could have done, I think, placed as he was ; he faced the pig, who was very soon in full career ; and Uncle, knowing quite well that he had only one spear with him, and that of the weakest and most fragile kind, knelt down on one knee to receive the animal’s charge, as, if he had remained standing, the shock would probably have knocked him down.

‘The spear entered over the neck, and broke short off—the steel head of the spear remaining in the pig. In a second she had seized the staff in her mouth,

holding it firmly with her teeth ; but your uncle, catching hold of each end of the stick, twisted and wrenched it away, and instantly struck her twice or three times on the head with the butt end of it, which put an end to the conflict, for she was stunned, and soon after died.'

'Then what became of the pig, Auntie?' asked Ellen.

'Uncle first of all took bearings of the spot where the dead pig lay—that is, he took notice of, and marked well the principal objects near the place, such as trees, bushes, &c. ; and then walked off about three miles away to the north, in search of his runaway pony ; came up with, and caught him at last : he then mounted, and rode him back to a village not far from the scene of his fight with the pig ; there he managed to procure a cart or "bandy," and brought the dead animal to our temporary home, greatly to the delight of our servants, who knew a good dinner was in store for them that day.'

WILD PORK, ETC.

'Do you mean to say the pig was eaten the same day it was killed?' asked Mary.

'Yes,' replied Mrs. Newton, 'meat will not keep in India without being cooked—pork especially ; the wild pig is never tough ; but always tender, and good for food at all seasons of the year. We doubly enjoy eating it when it can be procured, as we never get tame pigs fit for eating except on rare occasions.'

‘Why is that?’ said Hubert.

‘Because tame pigs in India are very unclean animals; they are a kind of scavengers or street-cleaners in the village or town to which they may belong; and they eat all that is filthy in the place; consequently, they are never eaten by Europeans.’

‘Then I suppose,’ said Mary, ‘you do not taste pork, except when you get it wild.’

‘Occasionally we do, but very seldom. Sometimes an European man rears, feeds, and kills a pig; then we are able to get a joint of nice pork; and in some stations there are regular pork butchers, who keep a number of pigs, and supply every one with pork, ham, and bacon; this is a great convenience; but in our part of India we have nothing of the kind; so you may fancy what a treat the wild boar is to us!’

‘Now, dear children, I must go and dress for dinner; I heard the first bell ring nearly twelve minutes ago; but, if God wills, I will tell you another story to-morrow which may interest you as much as these have done.’

Mrs. Newton then left the room amidst their hearty thanks for the amusement she had afforded them.





Aunt Flora's Indian Anecdotes.

NEWS OF A TIGER.

NOW darlings, come with me,' said Mrs. Newton to her nephews and neices, on the following day. 'I have just half an hour to spare before the dressing bell will ring, in which to tell you another Indian hunting incident : I have had a long drive, and shall be glad to warm myself by your comfortable fire.'

You may fancy the young people soon gathered round their aunt ; and very bright and joyous were their faces, as they sat with eager eyes fixed on Mrs. Newton, while she began as follows :—

'One day, in the middle of the hot weather, your Uncle Herbert and two other gentlemen, named Captain Staines, and Mr. Holburn, went out into the country on a general hunting and shooting expedition. They had several days' leave, and of course were choos-

ing out such parts of the country as were likely to contain most large game.

‘On the morning of the day in question they had risen very early, and taken their guns and their spears, and had been able to use both very successfully ; they had returned to camp, having shot a very fine antelope and speared two large wild boars.’

‘Please Auntie, tell me,’ said Arthur, ‘why do they always spear the wild pigs? why do they not shoot them instead?’

‘For the same reason that no one would ever venture in England to shoot a fox, dear boy ; it is not considered sportsman-like to shoot any game which is usually hunted on horses.’

‘Oh ! I understand now, Auntie ; thank you for explaining it to me.’

‘The three gentlemen,’ continued Mrs. Newton, ‘were just sitting down to breakfast with excellent appetites, and were quite ready to do justice to the tempting pork chops and the antelope curry with which their morning sport had provided them, when in came a man in breathless haste, crying out, “Sahib ! there is news ; a bullock has been killed by a tiger.”’

‘As soon as the words had been spoken, there was great excitement in the camp : at once three elephants were sent off as fast as possible to the spot fixed on, close to the place where they expected to find the tiger. Fifteen native men who were coolies, were sent on in

advance ; their business being to beat the jungle, and sometimes to make a great noise as they do so, so as to drive out any game which may be hiding there.

‘While the horses were being saddled the three gentlemen were making a hasty meal ; and finishing it with all speed, they mounted their horses and galloped five or six miles to the place where they found their elephants awaiting them. They then proceeded to the spot, each on an elephant, (your uncle’s was called “Rajah” and was over a hundred years old), where sure enough, there was the carcass of a bullock, half eaten !’

A TIGER HUNT.

‘They looked about carefully in every direction for the tiger, but could find no trace of him anywhere ; the whole party were becoming very disheartened and disappointed, when Uncle Herbert, who has remarkably sharp, quick-sighted eyes, noticed a tiger’s foot-print in the bed of a nullah, or water-course. Directly he saw that, he felt certain the tiger was somewhere near that nullah ; and he told Captain Staines and Mr. Holburn that they had better follow up the nullah and look about, for that mark on the sand was a tiger’s print, and he was sure the tiger must be near.

‘They, however, thought he was making a mistake, as no other than that one foot-mark was to be seen ; and, making up their minds that they had come out on

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a wild-geese chase, and probably feeling the sun's rays uncomfortably warm at that period of the day, they determined to turn towards camp, and give up what appeared to be an useless expedition.

'Uncle Herbert was not so easily daunted: he kept along the bank of the nullah for a few hundred yards, keeping a good look-out, and at last he saw above him—on the higher ground, about twenty-four yards away in front—not a tiger, but a beautiful spotted deer!'

'What is a spotted deer, Aunt?' asked Ellen.

'It is a very pretty, graceful animal, like a large English deer. It is a reddish chestnut colour, covered with pure white spots, and it has pretty branching horns.'

'Is it good to eat?' asked Arthur.

'Yes, dear; it is excellent venison, and would be very highly prized in England.'

'Well, my dears, this beautiful creature stood on the bank of the nullah, looking steadily at something; and there was a look of intense fear in his poor face: not one glance did he direct towards your uncle, who was advancing on his elephant; at any other time he would have scampered away on the approach of such a party, but on this occasion he seemed too agonized by fear to retreat or move. Nothing of this escaped the observation of your uncle, who at once said to the mahout (the mahout is the driver of the elephant, and sits on his neck), "The spotted deer sees the tiger

though we cannot see him ; drive the elephant up towards the spotted deer." The man did so, and they soon reached the poor startled animal, who was so terrified that he hardly dared to move more than a few yards at their approach ; no doubt, instinct taught him his preserver had come to save him ; however, be that as it may, he did not run away.

'What was it which met your uncle's view as he rode past the spotted deer ! can you guess ?'

'The tiger !' they all exclaimed.

'Yes, you are right ; there was the tiger, about fifty yards in front of the elephant, on the same side of the nullah as that on which your uncle was ; he strode along, with his head erect, looking truly magnificent ; the glossy black stripes on his tawny coat glistening in the brilliant Indian sunlight. He was an enormous tiger ; and as he walked on the bank of that nullah, the animal looked, your uncle said, as if he felt himself to be, as in truth he was, the lord of the jungle, being quite unconscious of the presence of any foe. I have often heard Uncle Herbert say that, to see that tiger as he was then was a sight he should not easily forget.

'As soon as your uncle caught sight of the tiger he gave a loud whistle, and held up his hat, waving it, to attract the attention of his friends, who were, by this time, some distance off. He dared not call out for fear the tiger should hear him, and run away before

they could reach him. Fortunately, they either heard his whistle or saw his signal ; for in less than a minute they had both turned towards the nullah, and were bringing up their elephants at a fast pace.

‘ Your uncle did not wait for them to arrive, but set off at Rajah’s full speed to the right of the tiger, so as to drive him back towards his pursuing friends, who were, doubtless, regretting they had not before attended to his advice. However, uncle Herbert’s manœuvre succeeded admirably ; the tiger, as soon as he perceived Uncle, turned round, and trotted off in the direction in which Captain Staines and Mr. Holburn were coming ; Uncle followed, and saw the tiger crouch down behind a bush.

‘ On came the other two elephants, the riders being quite unconscious that they were within gun-shot of the animal ; they were unable to see him, as the bush prevented them doing so. The poor coolies were in advance of the party, little thinking the tiger was so close ; and your uncle, forcing his elephant to his very utmost speed, arrived near enough for his voice to reach the ears of his friend, Captain Staines, and called out ; “ Keep back the coolies, man ! look out ! the tiger is fifteen yards in front of you ! ” Almost at the same instant the splendid animal charged, with a loud roar, right among the coolies : through God’s mercy no harm was done ; they managed to run away behind the elephants, and Captain Staines fired, and brought

down the tiger ; but in a moment he was up again, and about to charge with redoubled fury, when a second ball from Captain Staines' rifle rolled him lifeless at his feet.'

OUR NATURAL ENEMIES.

'I am so glad none of the coolies were hurt,' said Arthur ; 'how frightened they must have been when they saw the tiger spring out from behind the bush !'

'That they were, my boy, as they are not generally over fond of putting themselves forward in such cases, and it is well they are not, for they would run a great risk of being killed, if they were.'

'Do they often get hurt and killed, Aunt?' asked Hubert.

'No; I am glad to say it is seldom that an accident occurs, for, as a rule, the sportsmen who hire them take good care that they are not placed in any danger ; there are exceptions, of course ; some men are reckless of their own lives, and of the lives of others, which is very wrong and sinful.

'Killing a tiger is really a good action, as, if they were not destroyed, the loss of life through their means would be far greater than it is, and there are hundreds of native men whose profession it is to kill wild beasts, and who receive a reward from Government for every wild animal they destroy. Gentlemen can claim the same reward if they choose to do so, but very few take

the trouble to ask for it, nor care to demand it, as they would have to give up the skins of the animals, and these, you know, are the hunter's trophies.'

'Does the Government pay people for killing snakes, Aunt?' asked Ellen.

'Yes, for some kinds of snakes,' replied Mrs Newton; 'any one who kills a cobra-di-capello, and shows it to the police, receives from Government two rupees, which are equal in value to two English florins, or four shillings.'

'We saw a cobra-di-capello in the Zoological Gardens, last week,' said Mary; 'the keeper made him angry on purpose to show off his hood; he looked so dreadful, I could not bear to look at him.'

'The cobra's bite is deadly, is it not, Aunt?' asked Walter.

'Yes; it is quite fearful to read in the police reports the numbers of people every year who die from its bite.'

'I wonder,' said Walter, 'you are not afraid to live in a country where there are such dreadful things.'

'It is God's will that I should live in India, my dear; and so I feel, God will order all things well for me, whether in life or death. He is always watching over me for good; and when it is His holy will to remove me hence, I am quite sure He will do so just in the way which is the very best; at the same time I always guard against danger of every kind to the

utmost of my power, leaving the result in God's hands.

'One precaution I take, is to have a "chick-door" outside my bedroom door which opens into the verandah, as this side of the house is nearly level with the ground ; and I have found, from experience, that snakes can easily get into my room. This chick-door is made of very thin strips of bamboo, which are tied together with twine, and fastened to the frame of a door, which again is fastened by hinges (it has a handle, &c.), to the wood-work on the outside of the bedroom door. Thus, when the weather is warm, I can sleep with the inner door wide open, and with only the chick-frame closed, through which the air comes perfectly well, and every object can be seen plainly ; but through which, no one standing on the outside can see into the room ; and no snake can possibly enter.

'Another precaution experience has taught me to use is, never to leave empty boxes, or anything likely to afford shelter for snakes, outside the house.'

A COBRA IN A BOX.

'Would a snake, then, get into a box ?' asked Ellen.

'Yes, my dear, sometimes ; and Uncle Herbert killed one of the largest cobras he ever saw in his life, in a box.'

'Do tell us about it, please Aunt,' they all said.

‘I must make haste about it, if I am to do so before the dressing-bell rings,’ said Mrs. Newton, with a smile.

‘One night we had just fallen into our first sleep, when there was a loud rap at our door, and the ayah—a native female servant—said from the outside, “Please get up, Sir, there is a cobra making such a noise in the court-yard, just outside the nursery;” Uncle, armed with a stick, was soon on the spot, accompanied by a native man-servant, who held a light in his hand.

‘An empty box, or deal case, without a cover, and lined with tin, had been left there by our butler on a previous day; and the cobra had actually forced himself in between the tin and the box; it was a wonderful thing his having done so, as he was a large snake. However, when he got there, it seemed as if he could not get out again; or, for some reason or other, was anything but comfortable where he was, for he hissed loudly, making, as the ayah had said, a great noise.

‘Uncle took his stick, and drove it in between the tin and the box, when, after a search, he had discovered where the snake was. The stick struck him, for he hissed louder than ever; after a minute or two, he put his head out of a hole there happened to be in the box; and, as soon as your uncle saw that, he prepared to strike him on the head and kill him at once; so, placing the man in a proper position, and telling him

to hold his light so that the rays might fall on the snake's head, Uncle Herbert raised his stick to give the death-blow, when, away ran the man, light and all ! leaving Uncle with the cobra, in darkness. On your uncle calling out to him to come back, he returned shaking with fear ; again he was placed as before, and told to stay still, but again, just as the blow was about to descend, away fled the man, with the light.

‘Oh dear!’ said Ellen, ‘only fancy how little he thought of uncle’s danger ! The cobra might have come out of the hole and bitten him when he saw that the darkness favoured him.’

‘What will you say,’ said Mrs. Newton, ‘when I tell you that this man ran away the third time, just at the moment he was required to hold the light ; so then, your uncle finding it was useless to depend on him, took the light from him ; and holding it with his left-hand, struck at the snake with his right, and killed him. Had this cobra not been discovered, he would probably have bitten a coolie woman who was lying on the ground, fast asleep, close to the box in which he was.

‘While I am speaking of snakes, I may as well tell you—for I have yet a few more minutes to spare—of a fight Uncle Herbert and some of our servants witnessed between a cobra-di-capello and a hawk.

THE HAWK AND THE COBRA.

‘One day—about mid-day—there was a great commotion in our grounds, just behind the house ; and your uncle hearing the noise, took up his light but strong riding-cane, and ran outside to see what was the matter. There were the gardeners and other servants standing watching a splendid, noble-looking hawk, fighting with a large and powerful cobra !

‘The hawk had commenced the encounter, by pouncing down on the snake as he was crawling along in the grass ; he had seized him by the back, but had again let him go, having been frightened by the bystanders ; whereupon, the cobra immediately twisted his tail round the hawk’s left wing, thus preventing the latter from flying away. The hawk struggled, and tried in vain to get rid of the snake ; but all his efforts were useless ; the brave bird rose several times with a spring, and with the help of his right wing, ten or twelve feet in the air, carrying the snake with him, hanging down like a thick piece of rope.

‘While they were on the ground the cobra was biting away at the hawk’s breast, but evidently he could not get his fangs deeper than the thick feathers, which were like a coat of armour to the fortunate bird. He appeared, however, to be in the greatest terror at the dilemma he was in ; his eyes were almost starting out of his head with fury and alarm ; and no doubt, the

din made by the lookers-on helped to increase his fears.

'At last, the cobra, finding that all his attacks on the hawk's breast were of no use, thought he would try another place, and commenced biting his back, giving him two or three violent shakes, just as a cat would shake a rat, when she had caught one. Having done this, he apparently fancied he had completed his revenge ; for, suddenly releasing the hawk, he glided swiftly away.

'Uncle ran after him ; but when he was within two yards of his tail, the reptile stopped short, and appeared to listen, turning his head a little on one side for the purpose. As soon as he discovered that he was being followed, and before your uncle had time to strike him, he raised his head about a foot and a half from the ground, spreading out his hood and hissing furiously.

'In an instant—as quick as thought—uncle had struck him a severe blow on his head, which killed him at once ; and the next moment, while the conqueror was stooping over his victim, down came, with a tremendous thump, a long bamboo, about twelve feet long, by the side of the dead snake. This was the butler's doing ; he had come to his master's rescue with this long stick, fearing to peril himself by venturing too close to the enraged reptile. The length of the bamboo of course rendered it useless, when rapid

action was one of the requisites for safety; as long before the stick had descended, after it was raised in the air, the deadly snake's life was at an end.

'In the meantime, the hawk, on being released, flew to one of the lower branches of a tree near our house, looking rather crest-fallen and defeated, but by no means injured.'

'Then I suppose the cobra did not succeed in biting the hawk through his coat of armour,' said Arthur.

'No, he could not have done so; for, had he given him the slightest bite—sufficient to draw blood—the hawk must have died; and that he did not die from the bites, we have abundant proof in the fact that uncle saw the same bird near the same spot the following day; it seemed as if he had come to see after his enemy the snake, not being aware of his death. He was a very peculiar and handsome hawk, and could not easily be mistaken. Never again did any of us see him; so what became of him we do not know; it is possible he may have been measuring his strength with another cobra-di-capello, and not have got off so easily as he did on the day when his combat was watched by so many wondering eyes.

'I was going to tell you just now, dear children, only I forgot to do so, that I once held a living cobra-di-capello in my hand.'

'Oh, auntie! how could you do such a thing? Were you not afraid of being bitten?' they all exclaimed.

‘No, I had no fears of that description, as I knew the fangs, through which the poison comes, had been extracted ; and so, though it was an uncomfortable feeling I experienced while I was holding the reptile, I bore it for a minute or two, just that I might have the satisfaction which every English person feels in saying they *have done* a thing. The cobra I held was a very long one, and very thick round the body ; and was owned by a juggler or conjuror who visited our camp when we were on a march of six hundred miles down country.

‘Now, darling children, if all goes well I will come again to-morrow and spend an hour with you, in this snug room of yours ; I must not remain any longer now, or I shall get a scolding for being late for dinner,’ said Mrs. Newton, smiling, as she passed out of the room.





Aunt Flora's Indian Anecdotes:

PALKI DAKING IN WET WEATHER.

MRS. NEWTON was as good as her promise ; she was seldom known to disappoint any one after having said she would try to do a thing ; for unless it was, as far as she could see, in her power to perform, she would never promise ; but having done so, it must be something quite unforeseen which would prevent her keeping her word. And so it was that on the following day, this kind Aunt Flora proposed, that as the day was warm, bright, and clear, they should all set off for a nice walk.

The sun was shining brightly, and the fog seemed to have made way for a renewal of the past delightful September weather ; and they all—aunt, nephews, and nieces—started in great spirits. It was hard to say which most enjoyed the walk ; but to one accustomed for years to the bright sunshine and blue sky of an

Indian climate, the damp fogs of the late trying weather had appeared very depressing.

This thought occurred to Mary ; for she said, as they passed out of the entrance gates of her father's estate, ' How glad you and Uncle Herbert must be to see the sun again.'

' Indeed we are, dear Mary,' Mrs. Newton answered, for although people might fancy we had seen enough of it in India to last for a long time to come, yet I can assure you we miss its cheering influence in England, when the dull, cloudy days begin ; however, even in India we have our cloudy seasons, and most thankful are we to God for them ; for very sorely do we need the refreshing rain when it comes. The rainy season—or monsoon—in our part of the country, lasts about four months.'

' Oh, auntie ! do you mean to say it rains without ceasing for four months together,' said Arthur.

' No, my boy ; it often rains nearly all day for three weeks at a time ; but it is seldom, even then, that the mornings are not beautifully fine, so as to enable us to go out for a drive, walk, or ride. Then, in the middle of the monsoon, we always have a break—or term of fine weather, which lasts several days, and sometimes even a fortnight.'

' Does it rain very hard, aunt,' asked Ellen, ' harder than it does in England ?'

' Yes ; at times the water comes down in perfect

sheets, and reminds one much of what we imagine the flood rains to have been like when "the windows of heaven were opened." Sometimes the country is quite under water in consequence. You recollect, no doubt, my telling you the other day, how difficult it is to travel in the monsoon; only fancy! on one occasion when Uncle Herbert was travelling in a palanquin, or palki, which is like a comfortable but narrow bedstead, with wooden panels all round it, and a top to keep off the sun or rain, and it has a pole at each end by which the bearers carry the palanquin, placing the poles upon their shoulders; he had thirteen men to carry him, and they took it in turns, six of them carrying at a time. They find it easy enough to run along with the palki at the rate of five miles an hour on a good road, but on a stony or bad road they cannot go faster than two miles in the hour.

'However, at the time of which I am telling you, the rains had been unusually heavy, and the country was under water for miles and miles around. For about twelve miles your uncle's bearers waded through water above their knees without touching dry land, and it was with the greatest difficulty that they could get on at all.'

'Supposing the men had let the palanquin fall, aunt,' said Hubert, 'would not uncle have been drowned?'

'No, he would not have been drowned, as the water was not sufficiently deep; but sometimes in crossing

rivers, there would be extreme danger were the palki to be thrown down, for it is not at all an easy thing to scramble out of a palanquin in a hurry when it is upset and under water. A poor lady lost her life in this way not many years ago; and whenever I have crossed a river, since hearing of that fatal accident, I have always taken good care to have the double doors or sliding panels open on both sides, so as to be able to jump out at a moment's notice.

‘At times the water is so deep that instead of carrying the palanquin in the usual way—with the poles on their shoulders—the bearers are obliged to raise the poles to the top of their heads, and hold them there with both hands; this they do to keep the traveller out of the water.’

COMFORTS OF A PALKI.

‘Oh, I am sure, auntie, I should never like to go in a palanquin,’ said Ellen.

‘Indeed, my child, I expect if you were once in one you would like to stay there. Whether on a journey or at home it is always a favourite place with children; for my part, I know of no style of travelling so really comfortable as the palanquin. When on a journey—or “march,” as we often call it—I have looked on mine as my little home. There, at my feet, was my fixed table—or stand, on which I kept my tea-caddy, dressing-case, Bible, and other things; and underneath

it were two drawers, which contained partitions for pens, ink, &c. There were leather cases in the four corners of the palki, for bottles ; and a net bag, which fastened up to the top of the inside, into which I used to put my hat, gloves, slippers, &c. ; and there were pockets in the lining wherein to store more valuables. At the end of the palki, above the stand, were two glass windows, through which I had a view of what was going on in front ; and at my back was a little lamp which I could light when I chose. On the top, over the roof of my little house, was a large flat tin box, which was fastened on with straps ; this contained my toilet requisites and a few clothes.'

'Can you sit up, aunt,' asked Mary, 'or must you lie down all the time you are in the palki?'

'You can do whichever you choose, the same as you would if you were in bed.'

'Do you shut the doors at night?' asked Hubert.

'Yes, when it is cold ; but until I felt sleepy I always liked to keep them open, so that I might watch the beautiful Southern Cross.'

'What is that?' asked Arthur.

'It is a very beautiful cross formed of stars, which is never seen in England, nor in the north, but only in southern countries. I have looked at that cross night after night, when travelling for weeks together over hundreds of miles. It has become quite a dear old friend.'

‘Do you always travel at night, aunt?’

‘Yes, generally ; but at times we move on night and day, only stopping to eat. This is what we call “palki-dâking ;” then the sets of bearers are frequently changed ; but more often we start on our daily journey about five o’clock in the afternoon, and travel all night, with the exception of about two hours’ rest for the bearers ; getting into our “travellers’ bungalow” at seven o’clock the following morning.

‘A “travellers’ bungalow” is a house built by Government for the use of travellers, in which are beds, tables, chairs, and other necessary pieces of furniture ; and there is a man-servant in charge, who waits on us, cooks for us, &c. There is a fee charged to every person who enters, for the use of these bungalows, which is paid to Government, and a very great convenience they are to us, I can assure you.’

‘I heard Uncle Herbert,’ said Arthur, ‘saying something about “bullock-dâk,” last night ; what is that, auntie?’

‘“Bullock-dâking” is travelling night and day, in carriages drawn by bullocks,’ replied Mrs. Newton ; ‘they are posted all along the road, about twelve or fifteen miles apart ; one couple of bullocks are taken out and another pair put in. Very often horses are used instead, and this is called “horse-dâk.”’

‘Are the carriages the same for both dâks?’ asked Hubert.

‘No,’ said Mrs. Newton, ‘I have usually seen carriages with four wheels used for the horse-dâk ; and they are very heavy, lumbering, old-fashioned vehicles ; but the bullock-carts are built with two large wheels, and run along very easily. There is plenty of room under the boards and mattress on which the traveller or travellers—for they hold two comfortably—lies, to keep clothes, provisions, and other things. Then, as in the palanquin, there are leather cases for bottles, &c., and little bags in which to keep things that are likely to be often required. The insides of the cart are well padded, so that, when being driven over rough roads, the frequent tossings from side to side may not bruise more than is unavoidable.’

ROUGHING IT IN A BULLOCK CART.

‘In these days of progress, travelling by bullock-dâk is much easier than it was in former years ; as now the main roads are excellent ; whereas, when I first went to India, they were hardly to be called ‘roads’ at all. One journey in particular I recollect, when we frequently had to drive over great pieces of rock, and were in hourly danger of being upset. We had scarcely any rest during the night, owing to the roughness of the roads, and the difficulty of getting on at all. Very often the driver lost his way, and would call out and tell us that he did not know where he was, as he had got off the road and could not find it.’

‘What did you do then?’ inquired Ellen.

‘Uncle Herbèrt used to get out of the cart, and grope about in the dark till he found the road, and then he would either call out to the driver and tell him how to get on it again, or else he would return to the cart, directed by our voices, and lead the bullocks safely on to the road. Once we were detained two and a half hours in that way ; there was no moon, and the night was as dark as pitch, so that having once lost the track, it was no easy matter to find it again.

‘When I think of the dangers and adventures we encountered on that journey, I feel it was the most wonderful thing, and truly through the mercy of God, that we did not have some severe or fatal accident. We had the most narrow escapes from both.

‘Just picture to yourselves our going down a very steep and rocky hill, at the quickest pace possible for bullocks to trot ; one instant my side of the cart—or “garri” as we call it—was raised nearly two feet off the ground, so that your uncle had to throw all his weight on to my side to prevent an upset, and the next moment my wheel was down in a ditch, and his up, at an angle of forty-five degrees ! Then on went the garri, faster than ever, till it ran with a dreadful shock up against a high rock at the side of the road !

‘The crash was so great, that if the garri had not been very strongly built, it must have been broken into pieces ; the left bullock was thrown down, and the

driver was knocked off his seat and slightly hurt; but no further damage was done, except that these frequent shocks and alarms, want of rest, and other causes, made me so ill that I could not proceed on my journey.

‘After going about three hundred miles in this cart, I was obliged to part company with it, and continue my journey in a palanquin, while your uncle rode by my side. But it was some time before I could do even this, as I was detained three weeks by illness, in a large station, where, however, we had the good fortune to meet with a kind friend, who insisted on our going to stay with him.

‘Although there were many troubles to endure on this journey, yet we saw a great deal which was well worth seeing, to repay us for our troubles. We passed through some of the most beautiful scenery in the Bombay Presidency, and, as it was the hot season, we had an opportunity of seeing some of the finest sights in the way of burning jungles, that you can possibly imagine.’

‘Are the jungles set on fire? or do they ignite simply from the heat?’ asked Mary.

‘Both,’ replied her aunt; ‘the long dry grass, in or near the jungles is often set on fire by accident, or on purpose, and as often, perhaps, by the great heat of the weather.

‘How very grand it must look at night,’ said Mary.

‘Yes ; it is really beautiful to see hill after hill in a complete blaze ; but at the same time, it is not at all pleasant to see the fire taking the very direction in which one is going to travel. It has often made me feel very nervous, when I have had to pass close to the burning jungle, and have seen the flames only a few feet from me.’

JUNGLE FIRES.

‘It is a pretty sight to watch, from the summit of a high hill, the numerous and extensive fires in the jungles below, sparkling, dying out, and blazing up again in the darkness, casting a lurid light over the scenery, and dimly lighting up the whole !’

‘In the jungles round the Chiculda Hill, as well as on the hill itself, there is a quantity of long, dry grass, which often takes fire, and on one occasion when Uncle Herbert was up there, the wind suddenly changed, and blew the fire right up that part of the hill where his house, and another which was at that time unoccupied, were situated. The fire swept round the empty bungalow, fortunately not touching it, but it soon reached the out-houses or “godowns,” as they are called, belonging to it, and in the course of a few minutes, they were on fire, and burning to the ground.

‘In the meantime Uncle Herbert was not idle ; he foresaw that as soon as the fire had exhausted its violence at the godowns, it would next attack the long

grass in his grounds, and, no doubt, speedily reach his house ; so to avoid this, he had his own grass set on fire ; but as soon as it began to blaze at all, it was extinguished by men on the spot, placed there for the purpose, with sticks and small green boughs ; and when a sufficient space had been cleared, all was safe, and your uncle went to the burning godowns, to assist in putting out the fire there.'

'I suppose, aunt,' said Mary, 'things burn in India more rapidly than they do in this country ?'

'Certainly, as a rule they do ; everything being so exceedingly dry makes the best fuel for flames. There was a large mess-house in the place where we lived burnt down in a very few minutes. It was struck by lightning. Your uncle was gone to a funeral, and saw the forked lightning strike the roof of the building, and in an instant the whole was in a blaze.'

'At the time when it happened, the table was spread with plate, glass, &c., for the mess dinner, the handsome cruet-stand stood in the centre, and the lightning struck the little ball of silver which was on the top of the handle, making a round dent in it ; from the ball the lightning glided off to one of the glass bottles in the stand, knocked out the stopper, and broke the neck of the bottle ! That cruet-stand was kept by the regiment for years afterwards as a great curiosity.'

'How I should like to see it,' said Arthur.

'Was the mess-house ever rebuilt ?' asked Alice.

'Yes, my dear,' answered Mrs. Newton, 'it was again built on the former foundation, which, however, I should think, was a risk ; as, no doubt, there is something in the nature of the ground and the rocks about it which attracts lightning. Some years before the first mess-house was destroyed a magazine close to it was struck by a thunderbolt and blown up ; and I should never be surprised to hear that a third accident had taken place on the same spot, and from the same cause.'

THE DEWÂLLI FESTIVAL.

'I heard Mr. Fraser saying to uncle, last evening,' said Alice, 'that he wondered there were not more fires during the Dewâlli, than there are. What is the Dewâlli, auntie? and why should fires be more likely to occur then than at other times?'

'The Dewâlli is the great light festival,' Mrs. Newton replied ; 'it is a Hindoo feast, but the Parsees also take part in it. It is the time when they make up their books or accounts, and during which the wealthy ones give away large sums of money to the poor.

'Throughout the festival, which lasts several days, all houses belonging to Hindoos and Parsees are lighted up with more or less lamps ; these are placed outside as well as inside their houses ; so that in a large town there is quite a blaze of light. But on the great night of the feast every cash of money the poorest

people can scrape together is spent in buying oil with which to illuminate their dwellings.

‘It is truly a most brilliant sight ! The narrow streets of a bazaar as well as the broader ones of a large city are as light as day, with thousands, and, perhaps millions of tiny lamps. If the houses are lofty, each story has its row of lights ; the parapets of the walls and the bulustrades are covered with little earthen-ware saucers full of oil, each with a long wick of cotton lighted in it. Some of the rich Parsee and Hindoo’s houses are most splendidly illuminated ; and fire-works, native dancing-girls, and other amusements are to be seen in every direction.

‘The leading Parsee shopkeepers in up-country stations make the two principal nights of the feast opportunities for entertaining their customers. First of all, in the earlier part of the evening, in fact, as soon as it is dusk, numbers of gentlemen and ladies go to their shops, which are brilliantly lighted up for the occasion ; and wines, tea, coffee, biscuits, cake, &c., are provided for them, and not unfrequently nice bottles of scent, or other suitable gifts are offered to the ladies.

‘A band is sometimes playing in the grounds, which adds to the enjoyment of every one, particularly of the children, whom I have always found greatly delighted with this pretty light festival, and they very seldom go home empty-handed ; the Parsees, who are always

extremely kind to children, generally give them a nice box of sweetmeats, or a toy of some kind ; and to this day your little cousins, who left India years ago, recollect gratefully the good nature and kindness of the friendly Parsees.

‘ Later in the evening the shops are crowded with the Parsees’ middle-class customers, who thoroughly enjoy the whole thing, and stroll about chatting with their friends and acquaintances.

‘ During all this time the roads outside the entrance-gates of the Parsees’ grounds are lined with poor people—mostly blind, maimed, or otherwise helpless creatures—all waiting for their turn to be received and relieved by the charitable Parsees. We may be quite sure that *they* do not go away empty-handed ; and to them the Dewâlli feast is a time of great rejoicing.

‘ It has ever been a matter of surprise to me, as well as to Mr. Fraser, that more fire accidents do not take place during the Dewâlli, as, certainly, the numerous lights appear to be so many traps to set people as well as houses on fire, being placed in every imaginable position of danger ; and how the thin muslin robes of the natives escape being burnt when in the closest proximity to these flaming lamps, and often flaming torches, and fireworks, I am sure I cannot say ; except that God’s infinite goodness and providence are ever over his creatures, unworthy and most ungrateful as we are ; daily receiving countless blessings, and being hourly

guarded against many unseen dangers, but little remembering whose merciful hand it is which protects us from them.'

HOOLI AND MOHUNUM FESTIVALS.

'How very much I should like to see the Dewâlli!' said Walter; 'how pretty it must look to see a town in the distance lit up in this way! there must be quite a glare over it; is there not, aunt Flora?'

'Yes, Walter, it looks very bright and nice, but any one who did not know what it was might fancy the place was on fire. Is it not odd? the very poorest people would rather go without food than not have two or three little lamps burning in front of their huts! and on the chief day of their feast those of our servants who have spent their last month's wages will be sure to come and ask for some of their next month's in advance, so that they may make their show of light; and, as several of them live on our own grounds—or "compound," as we call it, our out-houses, or godowns, present quite a gay appearance.

'This Dewâlli, and the Hooli, are two principal Hindoo festivals. The great amusement for the natives during the Hooli is throwing a kind of red powder over each other; they make themselves in the greatest mess with it; the men, with their turbans and clothes stained in deep red patches; the women in the same plight, look anything but pleasant objects.

During this feast, all bullocks are dressed up with garlands ; and they paint, and very frequently gild their horns, making them look very smart.

‘The principal Mahometan feast—or rather fast—is called the “Mohurru” ;’ it lasts for ten days ; and is in honour of their so-called prophet, Mahomet. The last day of the festival is the greatest ; on that day thousands of taboots, (a taboot is a kind of dome-shaped cage, made of talc, tissue paper, and tinsel on a slight frame of wood), are carried, with long processions, and a great beating of tom-toms, or native drums, to the rivers, tanks, which are large reservoirs, or wherever there may be sufficient water ; and they are then thrown in.’

‘Oh ! Auntie, what a pity !’ said Arthur ; ‘it must spoil the taboots, throwing them into the water.’

‘Well, they would certainly be entirely ruined,’ answered Mrs. Newton, ‘if they were left there long ; but the Mussulmans very soon take them out of the water, that is, in a day or two afterwards ; and they are usually preserved until the following year, when they are re-gilt and freshened up again for the approaching festival.’

‘Some of these taboots are very pretty, and quite worth seeing as they are carried along above the heads of the crowd, glistening and sparkling in the sunlight ; sometimes a large quantity of gilt is laid on them, which adds both to their costliness and their gorgeous appearance.’

‘Why do the Mussulmans throw these handsome taboots into the water?’ asked Hubert.

‘Because that is the chief ceremony of the Mohurrum festival ; it is in memory of the funeral of their great prophet, Mahomet ; the beating of the tom-toms ceases, and the festival ends as soon as these taboots have reached their temporary graves beneath the water.

‘Does it not, dear children, seem truly sad that these poor misguided people should be year after year, wasting their time and money on such sheer nonsense ? and yet, some of them at least imagine that this is truth ! Oh ! for the time when there shall be no more taboots thrown into rivers as acts of devotion ; and when every knee shall bow at that name which is above every name ; and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.’

‘Auntie,’ said Mary, ‘I am so sorry you cannot always live near us ; we do enjoy taking walks with you, and getting you to come and sit in our school-room, and tell us about so many interesting subjects. I am afraid we shall not, after to-day, have any more nice conversations, as you and uncle talk of leaving us so soon.’

‘Yes, dear Mary, my time here is drawing to a close ; but I will endeavour to manage another little visit to your school-room before my departure, and after your lessons are finished for the day. And now, here we are at the lodge gate ; and look, there is Uncle Herbert coming to meet us.’



Aunt Flora's Indian Anecdotes.

RAM-TEK THE MELA.

MAKE haste, children, and seat yourselves round the fire,' said Mary Crofton to her brothers and sisters; 'Aunt Flora is coming down stairs in a minute to tell us something more about India. Oh! here she comes.'

Just then the door opened, and Mrs. Newton entered.

'It is so good of you to come to us again, Aunt,' said Hubert; 'what are you going to tell us about to-day?'

'I have thought of something which will both interest and amuse you,' said Mrs. Newton; 'and I am glad to find that hitherto my efforts to please have not been fruitless. It is better to be told about places and things you have not seen than to hear tales of fairies, and of people who you know could never have existed.'

‘That is just what I always feel,’ said Elleg; ‘however pretty and interesting the stories may be, I always wish they were true. And now, dear Aunt Flora, we are all ready for you to commence.’

‘I am going to tell you,’ began Mrs. Newton, ‘about a place called “Ram-têk,” in India. It is situated about twenty-four miles from the large city of Nagpore, in the Central Provinces.

‘One mile from the village of Ram-têk lies another village called “Umbârra,” where every year, generally in November, a large fair—or Mêla—is held, which lasts for about ten days. Several thousands of Hindoos come from every part of India to this Mêla; and while they are there, they take the opportunity of going up to the summit of the Ram-têk hill, to worship in the great temple, where one of their principal gods—or idols—is enshrined.

‘The view from the top of the hill is in every direction most beautiful. Immediately below it on one side, lies the village of Ram-têk; while on the other is the village of Umbârra, with its pretty tank, which looks just like a lake embedded in trees, and surrounded except on one side, by the Ram-têk range, which takes the form of a horse-shoe. Along the water’s edge are several small temples, whose white pinnacles are pretty objects in the fore-ground of the view, as they glitter in the sunlight. There are thirteen different tanks—which, as I before told you, are reservoirs—

varying in size, to be seen from the top of the hill ; dense jungles, stretching for miles and miles away in the distance, and the Munsser and other ranges of hills towering one above the other. The extent of the view is so great, that one hill, eighty miles off, can be seen by those who know the direction in which to look for it.

‘ How shall I describe the Mêla to you ? It is no easy task, as there is nothing in English fairs like it. Numbers of streets are formed by booths being erected on either side of the road ; each trade has its own street, or part of a street. First you will see one with nothing but sweetmeats sold in it ; then will come a row of cloth-merchants ; then tin-men ; next, men who sell brass cooking pots, basins, and all sorts of utensils made of brass ; fancy stalls, where toys, writing paper, and no end of nick-nacks are sold ; and there are various other streets, too numerous to mention.

‘ It is certainly a pretty sight, and one quite worth the trouble of going to see. Did I say “trouble ?” Well, perhaps dears, I was wrong ; “labour” would be the better word of the two, to express the real exertion one has to undergo, in getting down to, and up from the Mêla. After a walk of a quarter of a mile or more from the level on which the bungalow, or house is built, where visitors stay, one has to go down about six hundred steps, and then walk another half mile to the nearest stall in the Mêla ; and of course

in returning it is the same, except that it is ascending all the way, instead of descending.'

'Oh ! Aunt,' said Alice, 'how tiring the steps must be ! it would, indeed, be a labour.'

'That it is, Alice, particularly as some of them are extremely steep, and being very ancient, are somewhat worn with constant use. There are a few stones, here and there displaced, but, as a rule, they are wonderfully well preserved, considering the hundreds of years they have been built.'

TEMPLES AND IDOLATRY.

'There are several objects of interest on the Ram-têk hill : it is a very favourite place with children, and the pure air up there soon puts roses into their pale faces. One spot your little cousins used to visit nearly every evening ; that was a very large square well ; it has steps on one side of it, down to the water's edge. You may fancy it is a wonderful thing to find such a large well not far from the top of a very high hill ! Any Hindoo servants we might happen to have, would go to that well every morning and evening to cook their food ; and several people would be coming to draw water, so that it often presented a lively and busy scene.

'There are also several very ancient remains of gateways, temples, and portions of the large fort, which once enclosed all the buildings on the top of the hill ;

and one cannot help being struck with the massive character of these ruins ; some of the stones are of an immense size, and though completely blackened with age, seem as if they would stand for many years to come, in spite of the violent storms of wind to which they are exposed.

‘To reach the great white temple on the highest peak of the hill, one has to ascend a good many more steps, beyond those already mentioned. None but Hindoos are allowed to enter the temple itself ; but there are smaller buildings, which are not closed against the public ; and one is worthy of note. In it is an enormous stone pig, said to be of a very great age. During the Mêla, when thousands of people go up to worship the supposed deity of the place, and when numbers of pilgrims come hundreds of miles for the purpose, one of the ceremonies they have to perform, is to squeeze themselves underneath the body of this pig, which is only about twelve or thirteen inches above the large stone on which it stands ; and this stone has actually become quite worn from the passing through of untold generations. I am sure it would make you laugh, if you could see some of the portly Hindoos struggling to force themselves through such a small aperture.

‘Although one feels inclined to smile at such a ridiculous scene, yet one cannot but feel sorrow to think that these poor souls should be so misguided. When

I visit Ram-têk, much as I enjoy being there, I cannot help feeling oppressed and shocked with the sight of so much idolatry. I realize far more powerfully than when I am in cantonments ("cantonment" means the station or place where the troops are, and where we reside), that I am indeed in a heathen land.

' There are numbers of images and painted stones—which they call "Sawmies," or "Sâmies"—to be seen at every turn ; and very often there are fruit and sweet-meats placed in front of them, as offerings to the supposed deity. Every evening, a band of native music plays within the precincts of the temple grounds, or kind of fort.

' All this is truly sad to the Christian ! I long to speak to them of the one God—the great God of heaven and earth, and His Son Jesus Christ who died to save them ; and I wonder at the patience and long-suffering of God, in prolonging the day of salvation to this poor lost world. And then will come the solemn thought, that the rejectors of Christ, in this enlightened land of England, will be beaten with more stripes than those poor heathens in India, who know nothing about the Bible and the glorious and precious Gospel. I think if these poor creatures, who are so earnest in serving their idols of wood and stone, could be brought to believe in the Lord Jesus, how great a blessing it would bring, and how delightful it would be to see them equally earnest in serving the living God !

‘We know the time is fast approaching, when “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea;” and when I am staying at Ram-têk, I seem to long doubly for that time to come.

‘Another ceremony which takes place during the Mêla—at midnight on the greatest day of the fair—is the burning on the top of the great temple, of one thousand beautiful cloths, or dresses; some of them are embroidered with gold and silver, and cost large sums of money; the richer the donors are, the more handsome and costly are the cloths, and all are presented as an offering to the deity of the temple. The crowd of spectators is so great on that night, that gentlemen in authority, and a body of police are obliged to be on the spot.’

‘What a dreadful waste of money it must be, burning so many beautiful and expensive cloths!’ exclaimed Alice.

‘Yes,’ answered her aunt, ‘but is there not a little lesson for us to learn in all this? These poor ignorant Hindoos think it a privilege to be allowed to spend their money in honour of their false gods; how much more then, ought we, as Christians, to honour our Lord and Master in our lives, and with our means; not stinting in using all that He gives us in His service!’

LIFE AT RAM-TÊK, ETC.

‘ But, to continue. The poor natives at Ram-têk not only worship stocks and stones, but pea-fowls and monkeys are held sacred by them !

‘ The jungles round the place are full of monkeys ; they are generally very large, with grey bodies and tails, black faces and white whiskers. They sometimes come in numbers and seat themselves round the bungalow, and it is most amusing to watch them and their queer ways ; the mothers pick up their little ones and nurse them exactly in the way that the native women do ; at times they are very noisy, and seem to have plenty to say to each other, and like the children, they are frequently to be found near the well, watching the women drawing water.

‘ Sometimes very handsome peacocks strut about in front of the bungalow, and one longs to get hold of their tails, and pluck a few of the beautiful feathers ; now and then they drop some, and we are glad to pick them up. No one is allowed to shoot a pea-fowl, it being a sacred bird ; but for this we might have collected a great many more feathers.

‘ The last time we were at Ram-têk two panthers had taken up their abode in the jungles close by, and became quite the pests of the place. They had run off with numbers of goats, sheep, dogs, &c., from both the villages of Ram-têk and Umbârâ ; and at last the

male panther took it into his head to pay us nightly visits !

‘ One night he attacked and very much injured one of our calves. The poor little thing was tied, for safety’s sake, close to the open door of the room in which your four little cousins and their nurses slept, and just outside the door, within two yards of the post to which the calf was tied, lay several of our servants fast asleep. It was not a very pleasant feeling to know that so daring a wild beast as this panther had been very near to my darlings, as they slept in the nursery ! So, after that the door was kept locked at night, and the calves were tied with thick ropes to three iron rings in the stone-work of the verandah, and the cows—their mothers—were placed close to them, forming quite a guard round the poor calves.

‘ However, this panther was unusually daring ; notwithstanding all our precautions he came another night, jumped over the back of the cow, seized the same calf he had before wounded, and making a second spring—snapping the thick cord as he sprang—was away into the dense jungle before any one could prevent him. It was piteous to hear the cries of alarm raised by all the animals near us ; they seemed in the utmost terror ; and amidst their cries, the shouts of all our servants, and the general uproar, we could hear the bellowing of the unfortunate calf as he was being dragged over the ground at a rapid pace to the nearest

jungle, where, the following morning, he was found half-eaten.

‘That day we left the place, as we did not wish to lose any more of our poor animals. There were great efforts made to shoot this panther, but he was too wary to be caught, and the hill being so precipitous and the jungle so thick, made it doubly difficult to get at him.

‘Just below Ram-têk hill are beautiful groves of mango trees. In the cold season it was the childrens’ great delight to go down there and spend the day under the trees, the shade of which was charming, so cool and pleasant. I can assure you, my dears, I enjoyed those days almost as much as they did. They used to play about, and make houses by the trunks of the trees, while I worked and your uncle read aloud. The cook brought down the meat and other things, for dinner, and in the course of ten minutes, made a nice fireplace of a few large stones he picked up and placed for the purpose; he always cooked as nice a meal there as if we had been at home, and he had his kitchen in which to do it.

‘Not far from our pic-nic grove was a pole, about thirty feet in height, from which, in former years, poor victims were swung at a Hindoo religious festival, called “Churruk Poojah.” A huge iron hook, attached to a rope, was run into their backs, and then they were pulled up to the top of the pole. The last time that this was done the piece of wood which supported the

hook gave way, and the wretched victim fell to the ground, and was killed by the fall. After this accident the frightful ceremony was not allowed to take place any more.'

'I cannot imagine, Aunt,' said Mary, 'how it is that people can be found willing to bear such torture !'

'I am not surprised at your wondering how it can be,' rejoined Mrs. Newton ; 'the fact is that the poor creatures do not know what they are about, as they have a great deal of bhang given them to make them unconscious. Bhang is a drug which, when taken in great quantities, affects the brain, and makes people more than half mad, and very often when natives are under the influence of this drug they do the most dreadful deeds. I will give you two instances of it which came under my notice.

'On either side of our house and grounds are gardens with deep wells in them. Strange to say, two men, at different times threw themselves down into these wells ; one was brought up unhurt, but the other died from the effects of the fall. Both men had eaten a good deal of bhang, and had thus become entirely reckless.

'Now, my dear children, although I have not been able to tell you many actual *stories*, yet, I hope I have managed to interest you with these true anecdotes of India. Truth is always better than fiction ; is it not ? My little readers, what say you ?'



*Lizzie Mears; or, An Answer to
Prayer.*

IT was in the year 1868, while I was in the Central Provinces of India, that one night I heard that a girl, named Lizzie Mears, lay in a dying state in the women's hospital belonging to Her Majesty's 9 — Regiment of Highlanders. I had known her mother and sister in former years; both were highly respectable women, and Lizzie, I recollected well when a little girl of eleven years of age. The 9 — had only lately arrived in H———, so that I had not yet seen either Mrs. Mears, or her married daughter, Mrs. Hayes.

I was very sorry to hear such a bad account of my little friend, and lost no time in going to see her. Before starting, I was told that it was very unlikely that I should find her alive, for she was sinking fast; and when I arrived at the hospital, I found her mother

in the greatest grief; but the poor girl still lived, although she seemed on the verge of the grave.

It was a case of rapid consumption. She was only sixteen years of age, and had been most suddenly stricken down; her weakness was extreme, and her cough incessant. She was quite conscious, and from the report of her mother, and the unsatisfactory replies of the poor girl herself, I soon discovered that she was dying without any clear views of salvation, and consequently without that peace which could alone support her in the dread hour so soon to come.

The idea of her end being near, alarmed and pained me more than I can say. I read the Bible; I spoke to her of Christ, and of His love for her, of His being ready and willing to save. I asked her if she would like me to pray. She answered, 'Oh! yes, if you please, ma'am.'

On entering the sick ward, Mrs. Mears had told me that one of the worst features in her child's illness was, that she could not get any rest from her cough night or day; she could not sleep at all at night owing to it, for it did not leave her a minute undisturbed.

Bearing this in mind, I knelt down, and the weeping mother and sorrowing sister knelt also round the bed. I cannot now recall the words I poured forth in my earnest prayer for this poor young creature, whom, from all accounts, I was never likely to see again alive. I can only remember that I prayed from my heart, that

God would, in mercy, spare this sick one, until she had been brought to know Christ as her Saviour. I cried to the Lord with my whole soul, that *she might not die unsaved*, and as I prayed, I repeated those words from James, the 5th chapter and the 15th verse, 'The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.' I then asked the Lord to fulfil this His promise, hear our prayer of faith, and raise this young girl up for His own holy name's sake, and I also prayed earnestly that, if it was the Lord's will, the racking cough which sadly harassed poor Lizzie might be eased, so that she should be able to obtain sleep and rest.

Soon after rising from my knees, I said 'good-bye' to my young friend, quite fearing it was for the last time. I could not go to the hospital the next day, the distance being great from where I lived; but the next day but one, I set off for the purpose of again visiting Lizzie, if alive, which I thought, humanly speaking, was unlikely. When I approached the hospital I quite dreaded what news I might hear, and meeting her sister, called out as she passed the carriage, to know how Lizzie was. 'Better,' I heard her reply; and in another three minutes I was out of the carriage, and at the foot of the steps leading up to the ward where the sufferer lay.

IMPROVEMENT.

Mrs. Mears came to the door as I approached, and with uplifted hands, exclaimed ! ‘ Oh, my dear lady ! Such an answer to prayer ! Such an answer to prayer ! ’ Tears of joy streamed down her face as she said, ‘ The Lord did indeed hear your prayer the night before last, ma’am, for, from the hour you left, my dear child began to improve, and her cough almost ceased ; so that she went to sleep, and only awoke once in the night, when she asked for some water to drink. From that time to this, her cough has been much easier, and she is able to take her food better. Truly I never saw a prayer answered in such a wonderful way before ! ’

It certainly did seem, and was a very direct answer ; and as I looked at Lizzie, and saw how much brighter, and less weak she appeared, I felt that, perhaps, God was about to grant all our requests—even to raise her up and give her a little more time to seek Christ, that so her sins might be forgiven. The cough, which had been so troublesome, was by no means frequent now, so that she could speak with less difficulty, and listen with greater comfort while I read to her. We again knelt round the bed, in earnest supplication, and I am now going to tell you how mercifully our petitions were fulfilled.

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After this day I visited Lizzie twice, and found that there was a steady improvement in her health. Every-

thing nourishing that money could provide was given to her ; several of the officers of the 9— sent her things she required, most of them being willing to show their sympathy by acts of kindness, for her mother was greatly respected by all who knew her. One officer had a large fan—or punkah, used in India—put up in the ward at his own expense, to keep Lizzie cool ; another sent her champagne, another gave money to Mrs. Mears, who was a widow and had only small means, to assist in buying the many necessaries the sick girl required. A lady—Mrs. Ross—whose husband was in the regiment, took much interest in her, and visited her daily, taking her jellies and other delicacies ; and what was better than all, she read and spoke to her of Christ and His precious promises.

Just about this time I was taken very seriously ill, so that I was unable to continue my visits to the hospital. However, I heard of the invalid very frequently from Mrs. Ross, who was a friend of mine. Lizzie, after being so dangerously ill that she was thought to be dying, became so very much better that she was able to leave the hospital and return to her mother's house ; although far from strong, she could walk about a little, and had some nice drives in kind Mrs. Ross's carriage.

Notwithstanding having been raised up in this wonderful way, yet the doctors thought her in a precarious state, and doubted if her life would be long spared.

Considering that this was the case, it made me doubly anxious that she should be brought to know the Lord, before it was too late. From all I had heard, I feared she was not at all seeking Christ. Whenever Mrs. Ross urged her to think of her soul's state, reminding her how very nearly she had died a short time before, and that now, perhaps, a long time here would not be granted her, she nearly always seemed to dislike the subject, and would say she felt sure she was not so likely to die as the medical men imagined; that she did not believe she was in such a bad way as they said she was, for she knew she was getting stronger, and felt a great deal better. She seemed like Felix, more than willing to put off all thoughts of eternity till a more convenient season. Deeply grieved was I to hear this. I could do nothing but pray for my young friend. Many prayers were, I know, offered for her conversion, and, through God's mercy, they were not in vain.

THE END.

Mrs. Mears had an old friend in H—— who, as well as her daughter, was a very sincere and earnest Christian. About this time they began to visit Lizzie regularly, for the purpose of reading and praying with her. They put the truth very plainly before her, showing her how the Lord Jesus had died to save her soul,—the just for the unjust; they begged her not to delay

turning to Christ, as none could say how soon her day of salvation might be over. It was indeed a mercy that words of truth like these were spoken to Lizzie before the day of grace had closed for ever.

At first their teaching seemed to have no more effect upon her than had Mrs. Ross's frequent appeals ; it did not appear to reach her heart ; however, many prayers were offered ; and it pleased the Lord, in His great love, to open Lizzie's heart—as he did Lydia's, when she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul. You can read about it, dear children, in that beautiful and interesting chapter, the 16th of Acts.

When once Lizzie was enabled to see her lost, sinful state, she felt deep sorrow for sin ; yet, through grace, was strengthened to cling to the promises of mercy which she had so often heard read, but which seemed to her then so little worth hearing ; now she was all eager to have them read again and again, and her whole heart seemed drawn out in love to her Saviour.

It was only just in time that Lizzie was placed safe on the Rock of Ages ; for directly after this, she was taken much worse ; she caught cold, and in a few hours, was again at death's door, this time not to recover ! She was removed back to the hospital, and in two days died a most happy and peaceful death.

The day before she died her sufferings were very great ; but she bore all very patiently, and longed much to depart, and be with Christ. She was conscious

to the last, and frequently begged her mother to mourn as little as possible ; as for her, all would soon be never-ending joy ; and she entreated her mother to join her in Heaven. She sent messages of thanks to the friends who had been kind to her during her illness ; and the last few hours of her life were spent in prayer and praise to Him who had been so full of mercy to her.

The day she died was just four months from the evening on which we offered up that earnest prayer, remembering that God had promised, that ‘The prayer of faith should save the sick, and that He would raise him up ; and if he had committed sins, they should be forgiven him.’ Most literally and truly had the Lord fulfilled His promise ; and all honour and glory be unto His great name for it.

This little narrative ought to teach us many lessons, dear young readers ; I will remind you of two or three. Five months before Lizzie Mears died, she had no more idea of dying than you or I now have ; up to about a week before she was taken so dangerously ill, she had been apparently quite well ; and yet she was not far from the end, which, nevertheless, was delayed longer than any one expected it would be.

Is it well that any of you should put off seeking Christ till a more convenient season ? Time may not be given you as it was to Lizzie Mears. Oh ! do not peril the safety of your souls ; but seek the Lord *now*.

Remember, this is the accepted time ; *this* is the day of salvation ! Next year may be too late ; next month may be too late ; next *week* may be too late ! Take warning, dear children, and come to Jesus now, while you are young ; whether you live or whether you die, you will be so much more happy. ‘Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not.’

In this narrative, there is much of encouragement to pray for our friends and neighbours. When we approach God, we must believe that *He is*, and that He is a hearer and answerer of prayer ; we must ‘worship Him in spirit and in truth.’ The promises of answer to prayer in God’s Word are numerous ; and I cannot do better than conclude with one which is full of comfort to me ; and I hope will be the same to you, ‘Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive.’



